A CENTENARY HISTORY

ADOLF OLSON

LIBRARY OF PRINCETON
OCT 14 1952
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

BX6247
.S8052

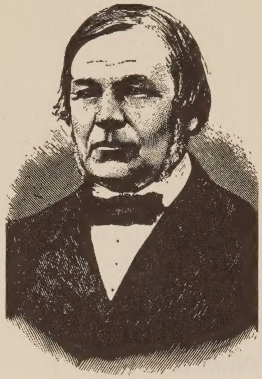
A CENTENARY HISTORY

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2024 with funding from
Princeton Theological Seminary Library

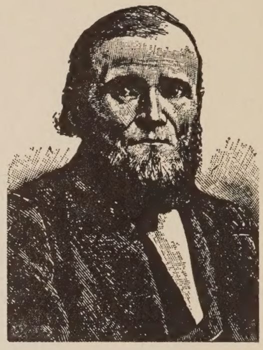
https://archive.org/details/centenaryhistory00olso

"For every house
is built by some
one, but the builder
of all things
is God"

HEBREWS 3:4

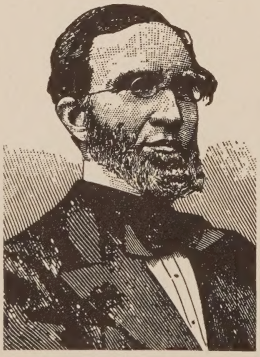


GUSTAF PALMQUIST

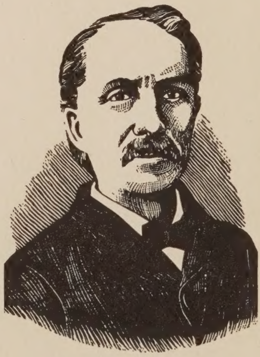


F. O. NILSSON

To the Baptist Pioneers
Who Made History by Serving Humbly
and Without Thought of Recognition



ANDERS WIBERG



J. A. EDGREN

LIBRARY OF PRINCETON
OCT 14 1952
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

A
CENTENARY
HISTORY

As Related to the Baptist General Conference of America

✓
By ADOLF OLSON

"A Century of God's Grace"
1852–1952

Published by
BAPTIST CONFERENCE PRESS
5750 North Ashland Avenue Chicago 26, Illinois

A CENTENARY HISTORY

Copyright, 1952, Baptist Conference Press

Printed in the U.S.A.

FOREWORD

As the people associated with the Baptist General Conference of America prepare to observe their Centenary, it has seemed only natural that an effort be made to preserve the historical records of the past, in order that they may intelligently interpret the genius and spirit of the people that make up this body of Christians, and make a proper estimate of what may reasonably be expected from the future.

The idea of writing this history is not new, and the work has not been done hastily. Back in 1924 the author of this volume was asked by the Conference to write a comprehensive history as a part of the Diamond Jubilee observances in 1927. For various reasons, however, that project could not be carried through at that time. But the work was begun and has been continued ever since. Thus, the history as it appears today, is the result of more than a quarter of a century of study, consciously directed toward the writing of this book. Critical research, writing, revision and re-writing have preceded its completion, and, as a result of these many years of solid preparation, we may well look for a work of real worth.

The author is well versed in his subject. A member for almost half a century of the denomination with which he deals, having grown up with one of the branches of the educational institution which has developed into Bethel College and Theological Seminary, an integral part of the General Conference organization, he became first an instructor in Bethel Academy and later a professor in the Seminary. There Church History was at first his main subject and, though he was later to devote himself mainly to Systematic Theology, he has never forsaken his first love, but has continued to teach certain phases of Church history as well as other subjects. Thus he has personally witnessed much of the denominational development of which he writes. Further, for all these years he has lived in the midst of the various activities of the General Conference and the men and churches associated with it. Again, for half a generation he has served as secretary and archivist of the Historical Society of the Baptist General Conference, and in that capacity he had access to and lived with a rich and invaluable historical collection of which he made good use in preparation for his history.

There is always a danger when one deals with material which has become very familiar. Such familiarity may bring about a spirit of casualness and nonchalance. Not so in the case of this author. A deep sense of the pietas which the ancient Romans practiced in connection with divinity, fatherland and home, has pervaded his mind as he has been making his history. In fact, there are instances when he grows subjectively lyrical in his enthusiasm for the upbuilding of churches, the rebirth of souls, the genesis and growth of institutions. If objective aloofness is an absolute condition for relating important things that have come to pass in individuals, churches, and the denomination at large, he will probably be willing to admit that he has been at fault as his enthusiasm has made him feel like shouting forth an occasional hallelujah. No doubt he will say he could not otherwise, for thus the spirit moved him.

Because the work of the folk connected with the Baptist General Conference has never grown big and unwieldy, the author has found it possible to deal with things that in the chronicles of a larger denomination would be regarded as minutiae: the birth and growth of local churches, the life and labors of individuals whose influence has not made itself felt nationally, but has been an important means within a smaller area for promoting the work to which they have devoted their lives. Hence he has found it possible to make the history live and glow in relating the story of pioneer churches and backwoods missions, and as he has concerned himself with the life and labors of God's noblemen who made their way afoot along the highways and footpaths of the American frontiers, while there were still frontiers to cultivate for the gospel.

The present volume will prove a rich storehouse of historical information to which the future historian as well as the casual reader will find it worth his while to resort for information and helpful guidance. Each historical item is fully documented, and the numerous footnotes will serve as a guidance for such students of Baptist history as may require verification of the statements made, or desire to dig still more deeply into the mines from which the author has brought forth his rich store of historical lore.

J. O. BACKLUND.

Chicago, Ill.

CONTENTS

Foreword VII
Preface XI

PART ONE—PIONEERING

CHAPTER ONE
Introduction 1
CHAPTER TWO
The Background 9
CHAPTER THREE
The Founders 25
CHAPTER FOUR
Beginnings in Three States 43
CHAPTER FIVE
A Frontier People 61
CHAPTER SIX
The Struggle for Existence 78
CHAPTER SEVEN
An Enlarged Front 92
CHAPTER EIGHT
An Enlarged Front (Continued) 106
CHAPTER NINE
Early Pioneer Preachers 132
CHAPTER TEN
Early Conferences 140

PART TWO—THE ERA OF EXPANSION

CHAPTER ELEVEN
A Theological Seminary 153
CHAPTER TWELVE
A Denominational Press 168
CHAPTER THIRTEEN
Churches in Minnesota 174
CHAPTER FOURTEEN
Churches in Minnesota (Continued) 198

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Later Pioneer Preachers in Minnesota 232

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Churches in Illinois 256

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Churches in Michigan and Wisconsin 286

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Churches in the Eastern Area. 319

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Churches in the Central States 344

CHAPTER TWENTY

Churches on the West Coast 372

PART THREE—INSTITUTIONAL WORK AND MISSIONARY ACHIEVEMENTS

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

The General Conference 405

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

State and District Conferences 446

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Educational Expansion 483

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

"The Gospel of the Printed Page" 500

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

The Gospel in All the World 516

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

Youth Activities 540

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

Men's and Women's Organizations 555

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

Philanthropic Institutions 560

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

Trends in Faith and Life 576

Historical Highlights 603

Bibliography 611

Index 627

PREFACE

"What hath God wrought" (Num. 23:23) was the first message that flashed over the first telegraph wire. That was also the substance of Paul's message when he returned to the home church from his missionary journeys. "They rehearsed all that God had done with them," Acts 14:27. The fundamental purpose of this history is to do just that, to relate as clearly and objectively as it is humanly possible what God has done in a century of His grace through the people called the Swedish Baptists of America.

The venture is not entirely new. At the turn of the century A. G. Hall produced his "Svenska Baptisternas Historia," in two volumes, the first volume dealing with the Baptists in Sweden and the second volume with the Swedish Baptists in America. In nature it was largely biographical. Then, in 1933, J. O. Backlund's "Swedish Baptists in America" appeared. It is brief and compact and well arranged. As the denomination approached the completion of a century of service, the need was felt for a more comprehensive history which would set forth anew the life and labor of the pioneers as well as more recent achievements, to the present and future generations. More than twenty-five years ago the writer was asked to prepare a jubilee history for the Seventy-fifth Anniversary of Swedish Baptists in 1927. Due to a lack of time, however, the plan could not be realized then. But the groundwork for the present volume, by means of a careful study of the sources, gradually emerged in the course of the following years.

The writer has been a part of the Swedish Baptist movement for nearly fifty years and an eyewitness to many of the events related in this story. Next to the grace of God, he is a debtor to the people whose fellowship he so much enjoys. As an insider and influenced by his background and environment, he is keenly aware of the difficulty of being impartial in all matters. After all, "we know in part" only. And yet, it can honestly be said that the aim has been that of the fair and unbiased historian. Moreover, the main emphasis has been on the recording of historical facts rather than on an interpretation of such facts, even though it is readily granted that the two—event and interpretation—can hardly be separated.

In regard to the sources, that, too, is an interesting story. As early as 1892 the General Conference appointed a historical committee whose primary duty should be to collect and arrange material pertaining to

Swedish Baptist history. When the committee was revitalized in 1898, with C. G. Lagergren and Emanuel Schmidt as the most active members, the work began in earnest and with gratifying results. In 1937 the Historical Committee became the Historical Society of the General Conference, with J. E. Klingberg as president. For several years Eric Berg was employed as the agent, or general collector, of the Society, and as he traveled up and down the country, visiting all the churches, he succeeded in discovering hundreds of valuable historical documents. The large collection, composed of a complete file of the denominational papers from its beginning in 1871 to the present, some four hundred histories, both in print and manuscript form, of local churches and conferences, letters, biographical material, Conference annuals, etc., is preserved at the Theological Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota. It goes without saying, that except for this preparatory work of collecting source material, the task of producing a history would have been impossible.

In order to get a clear perspective it seemed both logical and natural to the author to divide the story into three parts. Part One, from the origin of the first Swedish Baptist Church, Rock Island, Illinois, 1852, to 1871, when J. A. Edgren started his theological seminary in Chicago, and, also, his paper "Zions Wäktare," deals with the life and labor of the immigrant pioneers, who laid a good foundation. In Part Two the planting of older local churches is discussed at some length, and briefly also most of the younger churches. Such treatment would not seem feasible in histories of the larger denominations, but in the story of a smaller group, like the General Conference fellowship, it is not only possible but very important as well. For the local churches really constitute the backbone of all institutional endeavor. The subject of the account in Part Three is the churches united for action to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth by means of conferences, schools and projects of publication.

It has been said that the history of the world is the biography of great men. That is equally true of the history of the church. With that in mind it has been the aim of this writer to make use of as much biographical material as space would allow. As the reader is being introduced to the pioneers, it is hoped that he will be inspired by their faith and sacrifice to walk in the footsteps of the men who laid a good foundation.

The author gladly acknowledges his indebtedness to many friends who have inspired him with a love for history in general, and for the history of his own fellowship in particular, as well as to many who have rendered valuable assistance in the preparation of this work. First and foremost in that group is his first teacher in Church History, Eric Sandell, that brilliant scholar and educator at Bethel Theological Seminary. Special thanks are due to Professor Esther Sabel of Bethel College and Seminary, to Robert Klingberg, and to the editorial committee, J. O. Backlund, C. Geo. Ericson and Martin Erikson, who have read the manuscript and made many helpful suggestions.

The writing of this history has been a labor of love, and the book is sent forth with a prayer to the great Head of the church that His name may be glorified in every line, and that it may inspire us and our descendants to follow the Master and the pioneers by whose life and labor we have been enriched.

ADOLF OLSON

Bethel Theological Seminary
St. Paul, Minnesota

PART ONE

PIONEERING

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

THE SWEDISH BAPTISTS, with a history which dates back to 1852, constitute one of the smaller religious bodies of America. The present membership is approximately forty-seven thousand. They are, however, well organized into state conferences, and a general conference with three major branches of work, namely missions, education and literature. Charitable activities, while dear to the heart of Conference Baptists, have been cared for by separate corporations. The story of the Swedish Baptists is not one which concerns itself mainly with prominent men from the leading walks of life. As a rule the very opposite is true. It's beginning is a story of humble immigrant groups and tells of their struggles and hardships, of their defeats and victories, as they gradually strike roots and adapt themselves to American surroundings. Their chief contribution to the land of their adoption is along moral and religious lines.

BAPTISTS IN HISTORY

Not as an isolated group do the Swedish Baptists appear in history, but rather as part of the great Baptist family of which there are now more than fourteen million in North America. The Baptist people have a great heritage, and their roots stretch far back in history. Even though it may be true that "the history of Baptist churches cannot be carried, by the scientific method, farther back than the year 1611, when the first Anabaptist church, consisting wholly of Englishmen, was founded in Amsterdam by John Smyth, the Se-Baptist."[1] Nevertheless, recent investigations have discovered great numbers of Anabaptists, both in England and upon the continent, long before the Reformation. Beginning with the twelfth century it is certain "there were bodies of Christians under various names, who professed nearly—sometimes identically—the faith and practice of modern Baptists."[2] It is also certain, and impartial historians are willing to admit it, that the churches in the first century were practically Baptists both in faith and organization. A spiritual affinity, therefore, rather than historical continuity, is all that can be claimed.

---

[1] H. C. Vedder, *A Short History of Baptists,* p. 4.
[2] Ibid. p. 8.

The early church soon lost its first love, and childlike simplicity and purity gradually gave way to doctrines and practices that were foreign to the New Testament. The first evidence of apostasy appeared already in the middle of the second century when there was ascribed to baptism a magical and saving power. Infant baptism was a natural result of the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. This, again, made for an unregenerate element in the church with all its attendant corruption, finally culminating in the Holy Roman Catholic Church of the Middle Ages.

Christian truth, however, is self-propagating. It can be obscured but not exterminated. Throughout the Dark Ages there were heard, as it were, voices in the wilderness calling to repentance, fighters for freedom from an ecclesiastical bondage. Such were the Montanists, the Novatians, and the Donatists, who in the early centuries sounded a return to New Testament principles and a pure church. "The twelfth century saw the beginning of that tremendous uprising of the human spirit, in its aspiration after greater freedom, which a few centuries later produced the Renaissance, the Reformation and the Revolution. A reaction began against the despotism that had so long bound the spirit of man in the fetters of absolute dogma."[3] The Albigenses, the Waldenses, the Petrobrusians, and many others, were protestants before the Reformation. Like the Baptists of today they emphasized the Bible as sole authority in faith and practice, a regenerate church membership and believers' baptism.

The attempt to prove that the Anabaptists on the European continent originated with the Reformation, as some historians hold, meets with at least two difficulties. First, at this time, although appearing, as it were, suddenly in history, they were numerous and found in many localities. Secondly, they were well organized, complete in polity, sound in doctrine, strict in discipline. All this would prove that the Anabaptists had their roots in the preceding centuries. In the remnants of the Waldenses and other evangelical groups the Anabaptists found congenial soil for their remarkable growth.

Zwingli, the Swiss reformer, who more than either Luther or Calvin advocated a return to the Bible, had for a time strong leanings toward Anabaptism. But he was in bondage to the state church idea, and feared that without the aid of the Zurich council, and the civil powers in general, it would be impossible to carry the reformation to success. Thus the Anabaptists had to stand alone in their bitter struggle for religious freedom. And a bitter struggle it was. Balthasar Hübmaier, their ablest leader, together with a host of others, suffered martyrdom. Protestants and Catholics were equally zealous in persecuting the Anabaptists.

---

[3] Vedder, op. cit., p. 100. See also Thomas Armitage, *A History of the Baptists,* pp. 286–312; and John Christian, *A History of the Baptists,* pp. 60–82.

In Germany the name Anabaptist was applied to at least two entirely different groups, namely the fanatical and the Biblical. Until recently most historians seemed to be unable to discover any other Anabaptists than the fanatical trouble makers at Münster who attempted, with the aid of the sword, to set up a kingdom of God on earth. But there were others, peace loving, God fearing and industrious folk who, contrary to the common trend of the times, advocated religious liberty, separation of church and state, and a regenerate church according to the teachings of the New Testament. But everywhere the Anabaptists were severely persecuted. In fact, persecution did its work so well that early in the seventeenth century Anabaptism had completely disappeared from Germany. Many found a refuge in Poland, others in the Netherlands, especially after religious freedom had been introduced into this country under the Prince of Orange.

> The German Anabaptists committed the one sin that this world never pardons: they attempted a radical revolution, which would ultimately have transformed civil and social as well as religious institutions and—they failed. That is the real gist of their offense. Had they succeeded, the very men whom historians have loaded with execrations would have been held up as the greatest and noblest men of their age. The fame of Luther and Zwingli and Calvin would have been eclipsed by that of Grebel and Hübmaier and Denk, if the labors of the Anabaptists had been crowned with success. The true Reformation was that with which they were identified. The Reformation that actually prevailed in the sixteenth century was a perversion of the genuine movement, resulting from the unholy alliance with the State made by those who are called reformers. Two centuries were required before the fruits of a real Reformation could ripen for the gathering; and it was in America, not in Germany, that the genuine Reformation culminated.[4]

According to recent historians the Baptists were numerous in England even before the year 1611.[5] At that time, however, a more certain historical ground is reached, and a steady growth is experienced, especially after a reasonable degree of religious liberty is secured. The Baptists of England have, for almost three centuries, been divided into two groups: the General and the Particular. The General Baptists were

---

[4] Vedder, op. cit., pp. 182–183.

[5] Christian, op. cit., pp. 171–221.

Arminian in theology, believing in a general atonement for all men. The Particular Baptists were Calvinists in that they held to a particular atonement for the elect only. Centralizing tendencies and false doctrine undermined the spiritual life of the General Baptists, and by 1750 the major part of them had become Unitarian in their beliefs. Among the Particular Baptists, on the other hand, hyper-Calvinism proved a blighting doctrine and paralyzed all missionary efforts. It is superfluous to say that the Baptists of England participated in the benefits of the Wesleyan revival. "With it begins a new era in their history, an era of growth, of zeal, of missionary activity, which gave them a leading place among the Nonconformists of England."[6]

A modification of Baptist theology was an indispensable prerequisite to effective preaching of the gospel. This is due very largely to the influence of Andrew Fuller, who preached a modified Calvinism and thus made it possible for the Baptists of England to perceive the great need of foreign missions. William Carey, encouraged and supported by Fuller, launched the great modern missionary movement in 1792, and from that time the Baptist people in England experienced a healthy growth and development, counting in their ranks such preachers of note as Charles H. Spurgeon, Alexander Maclaren, and John Clifford, and a statesman like Lloyd George.

The American Baptists, now being the largest of the Protestant bodies in the United States, had a very humble beginning. In the winter of 1636 Roger Williams, preacher at Salem, was banished from the Massachusetts Bay colony because he denounced the principle of a state church and upheld liberty of conscience. He purchased a tract of land from the Indians at Narragansett Bay where he founded the town of Providence. A number of his friends found their way thither, and a government was organized, the first in the world, whose cornerstone was complete religious liberty.[7] Insignificant though it was, yet this government became the pioneer in a great revolution which finally established the principle of freedom of conscience in the United States of America. But to attain this was not easy. The Baptist people had to pay the price. From 1639, when the first Baptist church in Providence was organized, until 1786, when the Virginia Baptists secured freedom of worship, there is a long story of continued struggle—unjust taxation, fines and imprisonment on the one hand, and on the other a flood of petitions and remonstrances to colonial assemblies, the Continental Congress, as well as other bodies of authority.

---

[6] Vedder, op. cit. pp. 244–245.

[7] R. C. Mosher, *The Baptists in History,* p. 126.

The struggle for liberty being over, the Baptists were free to devote themselves to a program of expansion. Revivals such as the Great Awakening of 1734 and the revival at the end of the eighteenth century greatly stimulated Baptist growth. An incessant evangelism, however, was the greatest secret of success. Like the Methodists, the Baptists were a frontier people. Itinerant preachers, who were not sent forth but went forth to preach in obedience to a divine call, moved out with the people into the new western territory and led multitudes to the cross of Christ. A great forward step was taken by American Baptists in 1814 when they organized a foreign missionary society to support Judson in Burma. Of no less importance was the launching, in 1832, of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, chiefly through the instrumentality and labors of John M. Peck, the pioneer missionary on the western frontier.

It is safe to say that nothing so effectively promoted the rapid growth of Baptists in the nineteenth century as did the cause of missions. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the American Baptists numbered about 100,000, one Baptist to about fifty-three persons of the population of the country. By 1850 they had increased to more than 800,000, the proportion now being one Baptist to every thirty-two of the population, and in the year 1900 the American Baptists had reached the four million mark, every eighteenth person in the country being a Baptist.

Besides missions there were two other basic factors in American Baptist life, namely evangelism and education. Baptists, as well as other denominations, have experienced numerical growth and spiritual quickening and edification through the revivals which, from time to time, have swept the country. The schools, academies, colleges, and seminaries, which arose in quick succession along with the westward movement of the people, have raised the cultural standard and contributed largely toward the development of denominational consciousness and unity.

THE BAPTIST MOVEMENT IN SWEDEN

As the Swedish Baptists of America are a part of the large Baptist family of the world, they are in a more particular sense related to the Baptists of Sweden. A brief survey of the history of the Baptist people in Sweden will therefore be of interest.

In a sense, the Baptists of Sweden owe their origin to American Baptists, although no American Baptist was ever directly concerned in the work. A Swedish sailor, Gustavus W. Schroeder, by some considered the first Swedish Baptist, had been converted in a Methodist meeting at New Orleans in April 1844. A few months later he came to New York and found his way into the Mariners' Baptist Church, and on the third of November of that year he was baptized in East River. The following year, during a visit in Gothenburg, Sweden, Schroeder called on F. O. Nilsson, also a former sailor, who had been converted in New York in 1834, and who was now a missionary to the sailors in the service of The American Seamen's Friend Society. Led by Captain Schroeder to inquire into the subject of baptism, Nilsson was soon persuaded, and on August 1, 1847, he was baptized by J. G. Oncken in the river Elbe near Hamburg. F. O. Nilsson became the first preacher of the Baptist faith in Sweden.

In the evening of September 21, 1848, five of Nilsson's converts, four men and one woman were baptized in the waters of Vallersvik, a bay of the Kattegatt on the west coast of Sweden. The same night these five, together with F. O. Nilsson, were united into a Baptist church. It was indeed the day of small beginnings.

That the Baptists would escape persecution in Sweden was not to be expected. They were looked upon as disturbers of the peace and dangerous heretics who ought to be checked in their proselyting efforts. As to their source the persecutions were of three kinds: the brutal mob, the priests of the state church, and the civil authorities who, although often inclined to mercy, were constrained to follow the dictates of the church and protect the people from a threatening heresy. Captain Schroeder relates in a realistic way the compulsory sprinkling—a thing of frequent occurrence—of the first child born of Baptist parents in Sweden, a niece of F. O. Nilsson. As neither bishop nor priest could induce the parents to present the infant for baptism, the bishop sent the sheriff with four policemen to take the child by force from the crying mother's arms to the consistory, there to be sprinkled according to the law. A cow was taken in payment for the service.[8] The persecution that the Baptists suffered in Sweden, however, was not different from nor more severe than that experienced by the champions of religious liberty in other lands. As is often the case when new ideas appear, especially in the realm of religion, they were considered dangerous and heretical, and had to be suppressed in order to protect the established church.[9]

---

[8] Gustavus W. Schroeder, *The Swedish Baptists,* p. 109.

[9] N. J. Nordstrom, *Svenska Baptistsamfundets Historia,* Vol. 1, pp. 61–62. The persecutions, often brutal in nature, should be judged in the light of religious intolerance of those times, and not according to our standards of religious liberty.

Having been forced to appear several times before the Consistory of Gothenburg to answer the charge of heresy, F. O. Nilsson received a summons in February, 1850, from Göta Hovrätt at Jönköping, the supreme court in southern Sweden. The sentence of banishment was the result. The exiled Baptist preacher went to live for some time in Denmark where religious liberty had been gained a few years before. His persecuted followers in Sweden urgently solicited him, in the spring of 1853, to accompany them to the United States, and in June the small band of twenty-one pilgrims landed in New York. They were the forerunners of a great host of Swedish Baptists who sought in the New World the privilege denied them in their own land.

The Baptist preacher was not considered worthy to live in Sweden, but the cause he sponsored could not be exiled. By a curious turn of events, Divine Providence caused "the wrath of man to praise Him." A few days after Nilsson had left Jönköping, where he received his sentence of banishment, the minutes of his trials were printed in pamphlet form, and thousands of copies were scattered through the land. It appeared also, with various comments, in most of the leading journals of Sweden. The means used to suppress the preaching of the Word tended rather to its furtherance. In the words of Nilsson:

> From this day the Baptists and their doctrines were no longer confined to an obscure corner of the land, and to a few poor despised laborers. The truth was with trumpet voices proclaimed on the house tops, and the sound thereof re-echoed from cottage to palace, throughout the length and breadth of the land. Thus my appearance before the High Court at Jönköping was the public introduction of Baptist principles into Sweden. Let now the poor sailor be banished from the realm! What matters that! The truths that by his trial have been disseminated in Sweden can never be banished. Soli Deo Gloria![10]

At this time there appeared a man, divinely destined, it seemed, to be the leader of the Baptist forces in Sweden. It was the state church minister Anders Wiberg. Both by natural endowment and training he was peculiarly qualified to become a pioneer in Kingdom building. Being convinced that the Baptist position was scriptural, he left the Lutheran church and received a believer's immersion. After three years in the United States he returned to Sweden in the fall of 1855, and with Stockholm as headquarters, Anders Wiberg made many converts for the new faith throughout the whole country. A Baptist church was organized in the capital city in the spring of 1854, and within a year

[10] M. F. Anderson, *The Baptists in Sweden,* pp. 68–69.

or two the work of grace had spread into several provinces throughout the length and breadth of the land. As early as 1859 the Baptists in Sweden had 95 churches with a total membership of 4,311.[11] At least three reasons can be assigned for this rapid growth. In the first place, the religious soil was prepared by the "läsare" (Reader) movement in which Bible reading was greatly emphasized, and thus Bible study led to Baptist views. Secondly, the literary and organizing ability of Anders Wiberg and some of his co-laborers gave impetus to the movement. Wiberg was the author of a number of books dealing with Baptist principles, and in 1856 he began publishing "Evangelisten," the first Baptist journal in Sweden. That same year he also started a Bible training school in Stockholm for the education of ministers. Several associations, patterned after the American Baptist associations, were organized, and also a General Convention in the year 1857. Finally, there was the missionary activity of the pioneer preachers. They did not wait to be sent forth, but went forth everywhere to tell the story of the Gospel.

The Baptists in Sweden, though divided into several groups, now have some 70,000 members. They have one high school and two theological seminaries, a strong and well organized home and foreign missionary work, and their influence is being felt along various lines in the life of the Nation.

---

[11] Nordstrom, op. cit., p. 324.

CHAPTER TWO

THE BACKGROUND

WHAT IS permanent and abiding in life never comes isolated or unprepared. This is as much true in the field of religion as in any other field. The church historian must therefore be prepared to study religion in its environment and to interpret each event in its connection with other events in the social background. In the case of Swedish American Baptists there were at least three factors of a determining nature in the early life and development of this people. First, the religious condition in Sweden a century ago; second, emigration to America; and third, religious revivals in the middle of the nineteenth century.

RELIGIOUS CONDITIONS IN SWEDEN

That man is religious by nature is no secret. But religion has taken various forms and expressions in various ages and lands. The Swedes are not as forceful and enterprising as the Anglo-Saxons. The phlegmatic temperament predominates, and a deep and somewhat sombre religious nature distinguishes the Swede from other nationalities. This trait appears everywhere in Swedish literature and for long periods has made a deep impression on the whole culture of the Swedish people.[1]

The form of Christianity that prevailed in Sweden was that of the Lutheran state church, having been introduced into the country at the Diet of Västerås 1527 by the energetic king Gustavus Vasa. To say that a state church has no redeeming feature would not be true to facts. In the union of church and state there was given to the church an opportunity "to bring the material resources of the world into the service of religion." This is chiefly true of cultural areas that have been promoted and cultivated by national churches.

The church of Sweden is legally subordinate to the state, the king being the supreme head of the church. Writing on the state of the church in 1853, Bishop J. H. Thomander says:

---

[1] Henrik Schück and Carl Warburg, *Svensk Litteraturhistoria,* 1, p. 55.

> The church of Sweden is a worldly papacy, a state institution; the evangelical Lutheran clergy are the chaplains of the Swedish kingdom. This relation between state and church is by law fully determined and defined; the contract is written and signed. The state can break the contract, and turn the whole church out of doors whenever it pleases. The church, as such, has no independence. The state determines over her life and death; it does so, not by reason of being the strongest, as in some countries, but according to written agreement.[2]

In reality, however, the state church often proved to be a very despotic body. Such was the case in the middle of the nineteenth century. In the persecutions that wrought havoc among the saints of God in Sweden the civil authorities were frequently more disposed to leniency than the church leaders. Substantially correct is the interpretation of the Englishman Edward Steane who visited Sweden in 1858.

> The Lutheran church of Sweden is, perhaps, the most despotic ecclesiastical body in existence, not excepting even the papacy. It binds its members to absolute and unreasoning submission, and is intolerant of the action of conscience without its pale and within. And its power is as ubiquitous as it is dominant. It follows a man into all the circumstances and relations of life, and leaves him a free agent nowhere. The youth cannot be apprenticed, the young man cannot set up in trade, the citizen cannot become a member of any secular society as a trade, corporation, or city guild, a maidservant even cannot change her domestic service without the permission of the clergy. Under heavy civil penalties, every infant must be baptized at the Lutheran font. Every child at the prescribed age must be confirmed, and every confirmed person must at least once in the year take the sacrament.[3]

No matter what form of religion, the priests, or clergy, are usually the controlling factor. With notable exceptions, the manners and morals of the ordinary Swedish clergyman were bad. The archbishop of Uppsala, in an address 1868, listed as prominent sins among his clergy: profanity, blasphemy, dishonesty, lewdness, and sacrilege. And in the year 1859 P. G. Ahnfelt wrote in his "Student-minnen":

> Priests who preach lies and nonsense, who swear, drink, distill and sell whiskey, who play cards and gamble, who dance and behave unseemingly, who cheat and steal, etc., should be, according to the laws of the church, deposed; but how many of that kind are not left even without a warning by our bishops and coadjutors?[4]

[2] Quoted in Schroeder, op. cit., p. 82.

[3] *Evangelical Christendom,* Oct. 1858, quoted in Anderson, M. F., op. cit., pp. 28–29.

[4] Quoted in G. W. Schroeder, op. cit., p. 77.

George Scott, the Methodist missionary and forerunner of the free-church movement in Sweden, painted a dark picture of the state of religion in Sweden in 1830. He writes: "The Lutheran church, by all accounts I can get, is fast asleep if not dead; the priesthood has become worldly, sensual, and mercenary, the ordinances are neglected and experimental religion is unknown." Scott's disciple and successor, Carl Olof Rosenius, was equally unsparing in censuring the clergy and asserted that out of Stockholm's one hundred and twenty ministers only two were true shepherds of the flock. The explanation of this moral decline among the clergy is to be found in at least two facts. First, the lack of religious experience and moral qualifications, in general, in the young men who entered the ministry. Second, the training they received at the universities, in which the emphasis was placed on the making of a minister by way of education at the expense of the inner call and divine endowment for service.[5]

Deterioration in the moral fibre of a people always begins in the field of thought, especially among the leaders. In the first half of the nineteenth century neology had so permeated the church that it was said to have become a "magnificent ice palace." This type of rationalism had crept into the liturgy, hymns, catechism, and sermons. The sermons were often masterly and faithful to the text, but they left the heart untouched.[6] Side by side with the liberal tendencies within the church the old orthodoxy was struggling to maintain its place of leadership. And a winning battle it was; for orthodoxy prevailed in Sweden for the greater part of the nineteenth century. It was a Christianity without life, a cold and dead formalism. People with a genuine experience of conversion were few and far between. And these were so hungry for the true gospel that they would walk, as in the case of a woman in northern Sweden, over two hundred miles to hear a "spiritual minister" expound the Scriptures. Strange as it may seem, both orthodoxy and rationalism were permeated with a spirit of gross superstition, expressing itself in a firm belief in ghosts, witches and the black art.

A negative and barren preaching naturally resulted in corrupt morals. The words of an English churchman about the eighteenth century England before the Wesleyan revival injected the much needed spiritual emphasis in the sermons, can, with a sense of justice, be applied to Sweden:

---

[5] George M. Stephenson, *The Religious Aspects of Swedish Immigration,* pp. 5–9. This work is carefully documented and gives a good account of the Church of Sweden in the middle of the nineteenth century.

[6] Stephenson, op. cit., p. 5.

> There was darkness in high places, and darkness in low places; . . . darkness in the country, and darkness in town; darkness among rich, and darkness among poor—a gross, thick, religious and moral darkness; a darkness that might be felt.[7]

Intemperance had become, by the middle of the century, so universal that, as one of the newspapers put it, "the distillation of whiskey is the corn of the Swedish nation; if you tread on it, the whole nation shrieks."[8] Practically all classes operated stills, from the nobility and the ministers to the poorest among the peasants. In 1829 the stills numbered 173,124 and the annual per capita consumption of liquor was approximately twelve gallons, exceeding that of every other country in Europe. Alcohol came to be regarded as a household necessity, a part of the daily diet of both men and women. Even the child in the cradle was not spared from the fiery drink which was claimed to be an effective cure of all ills. Thus the whole generation became saturated with whiskey.[9] And the harvest did not fail: immorality, misery, crime and economic depression followed.

To bring about a reform of such a deep-seated evil was a herculean task. George Scott, the English Methodist preacher, devoted himself not only to the saving of souls, but he also became a pioneer in the temperance movement of Sweden.[10] Local temperance societies were organized in many parts of the country. King Alcohol, however, was not at all inclined to abdicate his throne. Even the state church, the supposed defender of faith and morals, assumed a passive or, more often, hostile attitude to temperance reforms. A partial explanation of this may lie in the fact that the temperance movement became an integral part of the religious revival that swept over the country, being especially promoted by pious and free-church people. That the consumption of strong liquors gradually declined was in no small degree due to the influence of the increasing number of men and women whose lives had been transformed through the revival of religion. Moreover, a few prominent ministers in the state church took up the cause of temperance, and men like Peter Wieselgren and J. H. Thomander made the movement respectable with leaders in the fields of science, medicine, ethics, economics, and politics, including Crown Prince Oscar, who became honorary president of the Swedish Temperance Society.[11]

---

[7] H. C. Vedder, op. cit. p. 243.

[8] George M. Stephenson, op. cit., p. 17.

[9] J. Bystrom, *En Frikyrklig Banbrytare,* p. 16.

[10] For a full discussion of Scott see Gunnar Westin, *George Scott.*

[11] George Stephenson, op. cit., p. 21.

With conditions such as prevailed in Sweden a century ago it was to be expected that the idea of religious liberty would meet the most determined opposition. The first step in the direction of religious toleration was the new constitution of 1809, which, in theory at least, granted the free exercise of religion to all subjects of the kingdom. However, this law remained practically a dead letter during the first half of the nineteenth century; for it was counteracted by another law, the old Conventicle Act of 1726. Persons who transgressed this law by holding conventicles were liable to fines and imprisonments for the first two offenses, and banishment from the kingdom for the third offense. In the coming of revivals the principle of religious liberty was being put to a real test, and people with pietistic tendencies who deplored the worldliness of the church, even though in doctrine they were good Lutherans, soon discovered how impossible it was to find freedom to worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience in a land where the state church ruled with an iron hand. The Conventicle Act, enforced in all its rigor, sent hundreds of pious folks to the jails. Only gradually and under the pressure of an enlightened public opinion did the state church yield to the forces of religious liberty. Concessions were made in the decades of the sixties, the seventies, and the eighties. Before this, however, many of Sweden's sons and daughters had sought a haven of refuge on the shores of the New World.

There is, however, a brighter side to the picture. Even in the darkest periods of human history God has never left Himself without a witness. From Germany came the Lutheran Reformation to Sweden in the sixteenth century, and from Germany came also, in the eighteenth century, the Pietistic and Moravian revival movements, which, like the rising morning star, heralded the dawn. As an after effect, so to speak, of these revivals there were in the early part of the nineteenth century a few voices crying in the wilderness and calling the ungodly to repentance. Among these Henric Schartau, Peter L. Sellergren, and Pehr Nyman, all ministers in the state church of western and southern Sweden, became especially prominent. People came from great distances of fifty to a hundred miles to hear converted pastors expound the Word of God. "Their churches were crowded; people sat in windows and stood in aisles to listen to sermons that sometimes lasted for over two hours."

As pietism usually is democratic by nature, it is not surprising that the revival of 1830 was largely a movement led by lay preachers. Many of these were school teachers, who, by reason of their training and education as well as because of their religious experience, were well qualified to lead the multitudes starving for spiritual nourishment. In its attitude toward the church the movement can be characterized by separatism and non-conformism. In the early stages of the revival, before the Baptists and the Methodists appear on the scene, it is true that practically all who were influenced by the movement were orthodox Lutherans. But this did not prevent them from seeking elsewhere the spiritual food which they failed to find in the preaching of the unconverted state church parsons. Thus the tendency to conventicles. The believers formed the practice of meeting in the homes to read devotional books, and especially the Bible. Hence they were called "readers" or *läsare,* a term applied even in our own times to people who show signs of a definite religious experience. In Norrland, the northern part of Sweden, where the people lived in small communities, far from any church and separated by deep forests, the *läsare* movement found exceptionally good soil. It was in this region, too, that Baptist churches became strong and numerous in the sixties, seventies and eighties. A thorough study of the Scriptures always constitutes the best preparation for the Baptist faith.

As is true in any deep religious awakening, the *läsare* tended toward a separation not only from a worldly church organization but also from the wicked habits of the ungodly. They shunned the companionship of the sinful. In speech and dress and manner of living they appeared as a "peculiar people." Theirs was the passionate happiness of Christian saints. Even on the way to prison,—for the jails were often crowded with believers who had violated the Conventicle Act—they sang the praises of God and preached the gospel to the crowds who had gathered outside the prison walls.[12] The contrast between the readers and their persecutors was evident and distinct. And just as the growth of the heretics in the Middle Ages was doubtless due in part to the pious lives and the Scriptural teaching of the heretics, and in part, and quite as much, to the scandalous lives and corrupt practices of the clergy, so also the dissenters in Sweden flourished and grew strong for the same reasons.

We have noticed that the *läsare* movement was democratic in its tendencies, that it gravitated toward separation from the state church and that in its emphasis on personal regeneration and a consecrated life it promoted religious individualism. That along with these fundamentally sound factors there should appear, in connection with the revival, two strange phenomena, one of a theological and the other of a psychological nature, is not easy to account for. Historically it is a fact, however, that fanaticism and peculiar bodily exercises have been quite common in religious awakenings, especially where the temperament of the people had a tendency toward exaggeration and excess.

---

[12] *Anders Wibergs Lif och Verksamhet,* p. 78.

As stated above, it was a time of moral decline among all classes. The great missionary leader and theologian P. Fjellstedt, wrote to his friend Wieselgren in a note of utter pessimism and despair:

> I have no prophetic insight, and yet I am convinced that within a half century the Swedish people will be lost and ripe for the most dreadful destruction, unless improved and active agencies of education will succeed in preventing the rampant immorality which now spreads ruin everywhere.[13]

The 1830's became a decade of crisis. The material outlook was gloomy. The cholera epidemic of 1834, and the comet of 1835 were believed by many to be sure omens of the approaching judgment day. Apocalyptic calculations intensified the emotional atmosphere already surcharged to the degree of a catastrophe. J. A. Bengel, a theologian greatly admired by the pietists, had figured out that antichrist was to reign between the years 1832 and 1836, and that Christ was to return June 18, 1836. Thousands of people were waiting with apprehension for the approach of this day.[14] The day came and went. The excitement, however, had left a deep impression upon the mind of that generation.

The other strange phenomenon of the *läsare* revival reached its height in 1841–42, and prevailed mostly in the provinces of Västergötland and Småland. It was a religious ecstasy, by many believed to be a real disease, and commonly termed "predikosjukan"—preaching sickness. Those who were affected with the preaching sickness—their number being estimated at between two and three thousand, from children to old age and of various classes of society—would fall into a trance, being seized with spasms and jerks, and their faces would become distorted. Then, under the influence of a strange power, as it were, they started to preach sin and salvation, warning the wicked of the coming judgment and eternal destruction. Often their preaching resulted in genuine conversions. It was not only the revival people who fell victim to the preaching sickness, but, strange as it may seem, not even notoriously wicked persons were immune. An ungodly fellow, as he was riding along the highway, was suddenly seized with the spirit of the preaching sickness, and in order to deliver himself he started to curse and swear, and he was cured.[15] Even people of a "sensible and sturdy stock" could not resist the religious ecstasy. Theologians and physicians who studied the Småland preaching sickness at close range, do not agree in their interpretation of it. No matter what may have been the cause, it is quite certain that these abnormal manifestations had traits in common with similar phenomena in other countries.[16]

---

[13] Quoted in Gunnar Westin, *George Scott,* p. 88.

[14] Ibid. p. 91.

[15] *Anders Wibergs Lif och Verksamhet,* p. 23.

In 1830, with the coming to Sweden of George Scott, the Wesleyan missionary, there was introduced a new element which was destined to have a far-reaching influence upon Swedish pietism on both sides of the Atlantic. It was not so much the twelve years of missionary and soul-winning activity in Stockholm that made Scott an important factor in the religious history of Sweden. Of greater significance was the fact that he became a connecting link between the non-conformist type of religion in England and the Swedish revival movement, and that he exerted a moulding influence upon some of the foremost leaders of the revival. This is notably true of C. O. Rosenius, Sweden's greatest lay preacher and leader of revivalism within the state church. F. O. Nilsson, pioneer Baptist preacher in Sweden and among Swedes in America, was associated with Scott in missionary and temperance work, and Anders Wiberg, founder and organizer of Swedish Baptist work, also was in close contact with the Wesleyan missionary.

In addition to this there was a distinctly American influence. Especially after the great religious revival that swept over the United States in 1857 and 1858 did the free-church people of Sweden come into closer contact with American ideas. American devotional literature was being freely translated into Swedish.

> The free-church people saw in the United States the most Christian country in the world and were not ashamed to acknowledge indebtedness to their brethren in America for inspiration, example, and material support. Some of them, more especially the Baptists and the Methodists, thought it was providential that America was discovered so late; that God had held this continent in reserve until the fullness of time, when the faithful could find a refuge from persecution, and practical Christianity could be worked out.[17]

Furthermore, as far as the Baptists are concerned, it should be borne in mind that both Nilsson and Wiberg had spent some time in the United States, where their faith had received a distinct direction, and the example of free America had become a source of inspiration and encouragement to them in their struggle for religious liberty. Thus it came about, because of the influence both from England and America, that the Reformed faith of the Christian church became an increasingly dominant factor in Swedish pietism, more especially among the free-church people.

---

[16] For a somewhat full treatment see Stephenson, op. cit., pp. 29–33. Also E. J. Ekman, *Inre Missionens Historia,* pp. 489–492; 1025–1033.

[17] Stephenson, op. cit. p. 39. See also Gunnar Westin, *George Scott,* p. 74; and N. J. Nordstrom, *Svenska Baptistsamfundets Historia,* pp. 15–17.

SWEDISH EMIGRATION

Swedish emigration constitutes the second determining factor in the life of early Swedish American Baptists. During the first twenty-five years practically all their members were Sweden-born, either such as had become Baptists in Sweden or else had been converted and had joined Baptist churches after arriving in America. Most of them had grown to manhood on the native soil, and their ideas and views of life were shaped by conditions that prevailed in the home land. It was not strange, therefore, that their past would be reflected in the church that the Swedish immigrants built in the New World.

The story of the Swedish colony on the Delaware is well known. It is stated in a few words by United States minister to Sweden, W. W. Thomas:

> New Sweden as a distinct political organization under the Swedish flag existed but for seventeen years. Yet, brief as was its life, this little colony occupies a memorable place in American history, and has left a lasting impress upon this continent. Most of the Swedish colonists continued to live on the banks of the Delaware, and their descendants have ever been, and are today, among the most influential and honored citizens of the three states of Pennsylvania, Delaware, and New Jersey.[18]

It was not the Delaware colony, however, that was destined to plant Swedish Baptist churches in America. That work was left to later groups of immigrants. Before 1820 there was very little immigration from Sweden. But from that year on statistics on immigration are kept, and the growth and fluctuation in the number of immigrants reflect more or less accurately the various reasons for their seeking a new home. In the first thirty years period, 1820–1850, there came about 11,000 persons. By 1850 the stream of immigration from Sweden began to assume considerable proportions. The exiled Baptist preacher F. O. Nilsson who came to America in the summer of 1853 wrote from New York to his friend Anders Wiberg:

[18] Quoted in O. N. Nelson, *History of the Scandinavians in the United States*, Vol. 1, p. 36.

> Swedes arrive here nearly every day. Last Saturday a group of sixty or seventy came on a Hamburg vessel for there were not enough vessels available in Gothenburg to accommodate them all.[19]

In the decade of 1860–1870 the number of Swedish immigrants had increased to approximately 72,000. The following decade a decline set in, especially during the hard times in America 1874–1878, when only about five thousand Swedes came. The stream of Swedish immigration reached its flood-tide in the early eighties, the number being 49,760 in 1881, 64,607 in 1882, and 54,698 in 1888. In the next decade there was another decline, sinking to 12,000 in 1898, followed by a high peak in 1903 when 46,000 Swedes landed on the shores of the United States.

While individual Swedes for some time had been coming to America, it was not until 1841 that Gustaf Unonius, a young Uppsala student, at the head of a small company of so-called "better folk," at Pine Lake, Wisconsin, thirty miles west of Milwaukee, founded the first Swedish settlement in America since the time of the Delaware Swedes. The colony existed only a few years, but its founder became instrumental in starting a movement which was destined to have a far-reaching effect upon Swedish emigration. The "America letters," written by Unonius to the press in Sweden, created a great excitement. Especially appealing were the opportunities offered the emigrants to own their own homes. From now on the constantly growing volume of "America letters" described in glowing terms America as the Land of Canaan, the promised land.

> Here a poor man may own land far beyond anything he dared to dream in the far off homeland; he has a right to vote and share in government, something unheard of at home; not the least of his many new found privileges was the right to worship God as his mind and heart might desire.[20]

No wonder that such letters spread discontent with the conditions in Sweden. Whole communities were infected with the "America fever." The result would be the formation of emigration companies, consisting mostly of family units, who, with a trusted man as leader, would keep together on the long and tiresome journey and settle in the same locality in the New World.

An investigation of the causes of emigration, whether from Sweden or any other country, brings to light a number of interesting factors which intimately affect human life and existence. The two motives that nearly always predominate are the economic and the religious, and Sweden is no exception to this rule. The comparative strength of these motives has varied, depending upon local conditions at different periods. Religious persecution, to be sure, has driven thousands of liberty loving people from their own land to more hospitable shores; nevertheless, immigration statistics seem to prove that the "bread question," the desire for material advantages, has been the greatest force in migrations.

---

[19] Gunnar Westin, *Ur den Svenska Folkväckelsens Historia och Tankevärld,* Vol. 3:2, p. 56.

[20] Carl G. Tideman, *Brief History of the Scandia Swedish Baptist Church 1855–1930,* p. 15.

In the nineteenth century Sweden was still a comparatively poor country. The wealth and the best part of the land, were concentrated in a few hands. A large portion of the population was compelled to live a life of poverty.

> "We can't be worse off than we are here," was the refrain from many parties. Herring, potatoes, and small beer are our daily ration. Meat and milk are rare luxuries. Despite extreme economy, we grow poorer every day. The almshouse will be our last resort if we stay here, but our relatives in America, who once were as poor as we, are well to do.[21]

No wonder that to people like these the "America letters" appeared like stars in a dark night. They instilled hope of better things. America was the land of golden opportunity. The writer well remembers how as a boy he read and often heard the story related that in the "great land in the west" a simple working man, a rail splitter, had become a president and leader of the world's largest republic. There was a tremendous appeal in that story.

Land hunger was an impelling motive. Possession of a piece of land, be it ever so small, "was the one thing above other things material that would satisfy the yearning for independent living." In the early days there were no free homesteads, but there was the preemption right under which land could be bought for as low as $1.25 an acre. Even at such low rates, few could manage to secure more than forty acres. But to work on his own land and make a living thereon, to possess a permanent home of his own, was to the Swedish immigrant the highest goal.[22] When later the homestead law was placed upon the statute books of the United States, it became "the star of hope that guided the emigrants across the waters and sustained their spirits during the days of toil that fell to their lot." A clergyman who took a claim in Kansas wrote of this law:

---

[21] Quoted in George M. Stephenson, op. cit., pp. 399–400.

[22] Andrew Holt in *Year-Book of the Swedish Historical Society of America*, 1921–22, p. 13.

> A finer law has never been enacted on earth. Where is the country that can boast of such an affectionate and charitable love for the poor? This is the brightest star in the whole galaxy of the Stars and Stripes. . . . In America, every workingman can, if he will, become a nobleman, baron, or count.[23]

Whole districts in Sweden were seized with the "America fever."

> Rustics who had never wandered farther than a day's journey from their cottages wanted to be just like their old neighbors—to see America. Their small parcels of land seemed even smaller when they read in an "America letter" that Ole Olson, formerly a humble cotter, was the owner of 160-acre Minnesota farm. To make matters still worse, perhaps Ole had returned for a visit, wearing American clothes and with American money jingling in his pockets at every step.[24]

The strength of the economic motive in emigration is indicated further in the fact that immigration statistics fluctuate with economic conditions in America. In times of depression immigration is at a low ebb, as, for example, in 1873–1878 and 1893–1898. But as soon as news of the return of good times reached Sweden the stream of immigration immediately increased.

The second factor in Swedish emigration was religion. Chronologically this motive may even have preceded the economic one; for the early immigrants were mostly pietists who had found the religious intolerance of Sweden unbearable. Moreover, it is significant that the beginnings of emigration from Sweden coincided with the great revivals, or "läsare" movement, in the middle of the nineteenth century. The revival people who emphasized personal regeneration and separation from the world, and who regarded the church as a body of believers, soon encountered opposition from the state church. Religious persecution in the form of fines, imprisonment and even exile, caused them to look for freedom on more hospitable shores. Emigration was the result. The dissenters were often accused of infecting the entire country with "America fever." In great numbers the persecuted ones came to a land where they could breathe freely.[25]

---

[23] Quoted in Stephenson, op. cit., p. 401.

[24] George M. Stephenson, *A History of American Immigration,* 1820–1924, p. 33.

[25] Stephenson, *Religious Aspects of Swedish Immigration,* pp. 7, 8, 9, 48, 141. Anderson, *The Baptists in Sweden,* p. 54.

The Swedish immigrant became an asset to the land of his adoption. It is true, perhaps, that he has never been as prominent in leadership as have the representatives of some other nationalities, coming as he did almost entirely from the lower classes. But the Swedish immigrants, more especially in the early days, were a people of a rich religious heritage. Their character, with outstanding traits of "industry, thrift, honesty, love of home and respect for law and order" had been influenced in no small degree by the Bible-centered "läsare" movement. In intelligence they ranked high. Among the immigrants to America, especially in later decades, there is one illiterate among 20 Germans, fourteen years of age or over; one among 23 Dutch, 39 Irish, 52 Welsh, 49 Bohemians, 77 Finns, 100 English, 143 Scotch, and 250 Scandinavians.[26]

A well known Minnesota pioneer, Colonel Hans Mattson, evaluates the influence of Swedish Americans in the following words:

> They have furnished strong hands, clear heads, and loyal hearts to the republic. They have caused the wilderness to blossom like the rose; they have planted schools and churches on the hills and in the valleys; they have honestly and ably administered the affairs of town, county, and state; they have helped to make wise laws for their respective commonwealths and in the halls of congress; they have with honor and ability represented their adopted country abroad; they have sanctified the American soil by their blood, shed in freedom's cause on the battlefields of the revolutionary and civil wars; and though proud of their Swedish ancestry, they love America and American institutions as deeply and as truly as do the descendants of the Pilgrims, the starry emblems of liberty meaning as much to them as to any other citizen.[27]

As was to be expected, most of the Swedish immigrants settled in the northern states, all the way from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The Pine Lake settlement of 1841, near Milwaukee, lasted only a few years. Its bourgeoisie class of people were unaccustomed to the hard work of breaking ground in the wilderness. But in the late forties a sturdier stock of immigrants began to arrive, and most of these settled in Illinois and Iowa. In fact, the first Swedish colony in the New World of a more permanent nature was located in Iowa, 42 miles west of Burlington. Inspired by letters of a member of the Pine Lake colony and under the leadership of an adventurous miller by the name of Peter Cassel, five families from Kisa in the province of Östergötland decided to emigrate in the summer of 1845. Landing in New York, they went by way of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, where they took passage on a steamer down the Ohio River, and then up the Mississippi to Burlington, and on foot forty-two miles west, where they founded New Sweden of Iowa. During the following years new immigrant groups from the same part of Sweden kept coming, and soon there sprang up other Swedish settlements in neighboring counties.[28]

---

[26] Charles L. White, *A Century of Faith,* p. 137.

[27] See O. N. Nelson, *History of the Scandinavians in the United States,* pp. 53-54.

The Bishop Hill Colony near Victoria, Illinois, the first Swedish settlement of that state, was founded in 1846 by a group of religious extremists from northern Sweden. In form a sort of communistic theocracy, this colony created for a few years a great sensation, but like all other similar experiments it proved short-lived.

Chicago was destined to become the largest center of Swedes in America. The first party, composed of fifteen families, arrived in 1846. The following year forty Swedish immigrants came to the city, and in 1848 one hundred more. In 1849 no less than 400 Swedish immigrants were added to Chicago's population; in 1850 there came 500 more, and in 1851 and 1852, 1,000 each year. The prosperous Swedish communities of Andover, Galesburg, Moline, and Rock Island date from the years 1847–1849.

By the middle of the century the Swedes began to discover the "advantages of Minnesota: a climate like that of Sweden and the most healthful in the United States; plenty of good land."[29] The first to arrive were three single men, who came in October 1850, and located in Washington County where they built the first log cabin by Swedes in Minnesota. The Chisago Lake colony, founded the following year, became the first permanent Swedish settlement in Minnesota Territory. Others followed in quick succession during the next eight or ten years: Vasa, Houston, Carver, Scandia, Grove City, and Cambridge.[30] It was in these pioneer settlements of Iowa, Illinois, and Minnesota that Swedish Baptists, as well as groups of other faiths, began their activities in the New World.

REVIVALS

The foundations of Swedish Baptist churches in the United States were laid by pietists who had found spiritual life in the midst of Bible-centered revivals. Moreover, it was providential that the beginning of the Swedish Baptist movement in the New World coincided with a widespread spiritual awakening among the American people. Revivalism, very common on the frontier, constituted the third creative factor in the background of Swedish Baptists.

---

[28] Ernst W. Olson, *History of the Swedes of Illinois,* Part 1, p. 196 f.

[29] *Year-Book of the Swedish Historical Society,* 1921–1922; p. 51.

[30] E. Norelius, *De Svenska Lutherska Församlingarnas Historia i Amerika,* Rock Island 1890, pp. 26-60. Ernst Skarstedt, *Svensk Amerikanska Folket i Helg och Söcken,* pp. 32–74.

> The fifteen years between 1845 and 1860 have been called the Golden Age of American history. The wealth of the nation more than doubled, the railroad mileage tripled, and the population moved westward with a rapidity and volume unprecedented.[31]

But it was also a time of reckless spending, of unparalleled fever for riches without much consideration of how they were obtained, of apathetic conscience, of selfishness, coldness and deadness in the church, and alarming godlessness outside of it. Skepticism pervaded all ranks of society.[32]

Then came the financial crash in the fall of 1857. Fortunes vanished into thin air. Solid business firms trembled to their fall. The very foundations seemed giving way. Every class was affected. Public confidence was swept away. In their fear and extremity men began to cry out to God. Jeremiah Lamphier, a down town missionary in the employ of the Old North Dutch church, New York City, opened a room in the consistory building on Fulton Street as a place of prayer for business men who might be disposed to gather there from twelve to one o'clock. There were three persons in the first of these prayer meetings. But that place and hour marked the beginning of the great revivals of 1857–1858. The next meeting was composed of six persons, and the next one of twenty. The Fulton Street meeting soon overflowed the capacity of the audience room. Other places were opened for prayer. By the spring of 1858 Burton's theatre in Chambers Street was opened for the noon day prayer meeting. The crowd in attendance is thus described:

> Half an hour before the time appointed for beginning the exercises, the house was packed in every corner from the pit to the roof. By noon the entrances to the hall were so densely thronged that it required great exertions to get within hearing distance, and no amount of elbowing could force an entrance so far as to be able to get a sight of the stage. People clung to every projection along the walls; they piled themselves up on seats, and crowded the whole stage beneath, and above, and behind the curtain.[33]

---

[31] *The Watchman-Examiner,* February 10, 1927, p. 170.

[32] C. L. Thompson, *A History of American Revivals,* p. 158.

[33] William C. Conant, *Revival Incidents: The Great Awakening of 1857–1858,* p. 362.

There were twenty daily union prayer meetings held in different parts of the city. Hundreds of places were opened for prayer from six o'clock in the morning until nine or ten in the evening. The movement spread from New York City throughout the country. A man in Philadelphia wrote to a friend in Sweden, March 12, 1858, "Today I attended a noon prayer meeting where more than three thousand were assembled."[34] Every city, town, village, and hamlet fell into line. So pervasive was the interest throughout the western states that it was said from Nebraska to Washington there was an unbroken line of prayer meetings along the entire length of the road.[35]

And what was the result? The Christian religion was again brought to the front. Everywhere, on trains and steamers, in banks and market places conversations centered on repentance and Christian faith. Churches were crowded, school houses turned into chapels, and many thousands were brought to the Lord. It is estimated that in one single week more than fifty thousand conversions took place in the whole country. Even from one of the western outposts of civilization, St. Anthony and Minneapolis, then but a small village, came the cheering news, "There have been from two hundred and fifty to three hundred conversions."[36]

It was in this decade, in an atmosphere surcharged with revivalism, that Swedish Baptists made their beginning in the New World. They had grown to manhood and learned to love God and the Bible under the influence of pietism and the "läsare" movement on their native soil. They had suffered imprisonment and exile for their faith. In the school of economic hardship and restricted religious liberty they had been trained, these immigrants, to become "Kingdom builders" in the American republic.

---

[34] *Evangelisten,* 1858, p. 128.

[35] Thompson, op. cit. p. 168.

[36] Conant, op. cit., p. 434.

CHAPTER THREE

THE FOUNDERS

The biographical method of writing church history, it is claimed, is the most complete and inclusive one. And it is a fact of interest that "makers of Christianity" have of late constituted a fruitful field of investigation by leading church historians. Almost every religious movement of importance bears the stamp of a great leader. This is more particularly true of the Baptists of Sweden. It is significant that three of the important founders of Baptist work in Sweden also laid the foundation of Swedish Baptist work in the United States. All of these, Anders Wiberg, Gustaf Palmquist and F. O. Nilsson, returned to Sweden after only a few years. Nevertheless, their lives became an important factor in the early story of Swedish Baptists of America. In this account they appear in chronological order, based upon the date of their baptism.

FREDRIK OLAUS NILSSON

His was a storm-tossed life: as sailor on the high seas, as a hated Baptist preacher in the storms of persecution, and, worst of all, as a doubter, during the last years of his life, in the gales of spiritual darkness. Nevertheless, F. O. Nilsson was permitted, under God, to launch a work for which thousands on both sides of the Atlantic praise the Lord.

Fredrik Olaus Nilsson was born July 28, 1809, on the west coast of Sweden, about thirty-five miles south of the city of Gothenburg. Coming from one of the poorer homes, he lacked educational advantages, but by constant and diligent reading he gained a fair amount of general knowledge, and in later years also biblical and theological information. As is so often true with children, he experienced a hunger for God and salvation at the early age of ten. It was a sermon of God's wrath upon every unregenerate sinner, and the eternal torment of all wicked in the sea of fire and brimstone, that created an emotional upheaval in the soul of the little boy. He began to seek, with prayer and much weeping, a way of escape from the wrath to come.[1] This bitter spiritual struggle continued for years and cast a shadow of gloom upon his young life, for there was none in the whole neighborhood who could lead the anxious youth to Christ.

---

[1] Letter by F. O. Nilsson to *Svenska Amerikanaren,* July 1879.

Like so many of his forefathers and contemporaries on the west coast of Sweden, Nilsson decided to become a sailor. At the age of eighteen he shipped on a Swedish vessel where he continued for several years. In the summer of 1835 he had joined the crew of an American steamer plying between New York and Charleston. In a heavy storm off Cape Hatteras, with apparently no hope of making the harbor, the young sailor, up till now boasting of his infidelity, was brought to realize his need of a Savior. "It is impossible," he writes, "to describe my emotions in this hour of horror. It appeared as if the hand of the Almighty held me by the hair over the opened hell in order to plunge me, in the next moment, down into the abyss."[2] When they reached New York he visited the Baptist Mariners' Church, and through the preaching and counselling of the pastor, Henry Chase, a warm-hearted friend of sailors, young Nilsson found spiritual peace.

A desire to share his religious experience with others, more especially sailors and immigrants, led Nilsson to take up the work of tract distribution in the employ of the New York Tract Society. In the fall of 1839 he returned to his native land with the expressed purpose of telling his relatives and countrymen what the Lord had done for him.[3] He found a wide open door to do missionary work in western Sweden. For two years he continued to travel, at his own expense, from place to place, often preaching three or four times a day, and dealing with anxious inquirers until late in the night. In the spring of 1842 he received a commission from the Seamen's Friend Society of New York to labor among the sailors at Gothenburg. This service continued until 1851 when he was forced to leave the country. During the winter season, when there were few seamen in the harbor, Nilsson made extensive missionary journeys into the neighboring country district, preaching the gospel and making many converts. He also organized temperance societies and Sunday schools, and, as an agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society, in the course of a few years, distributed many millions of tracts and not less than 50,000 Bibles.[4] He thus unconsciously prepared the soil for the Baptist faith even before he himself had become a Baptist.

---

[2] Letter by Nilsson to *Svenska Amerikanaren,* Aug. 1879. In his autobiographical notes Nilsson states that he was converted in the fall of 1834, and this may be the more correct date, since the notes were evidently written about twenty years before the above mentioned letter.

[3] See Nilsson's autobiographical notes. These notes, covering about twenty years of his life, 1834–1853, are a part of his diary. The diary itself, in manuscript form, covers the period from 1855 to 1865, and is preserved in the archives of Bethel Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.

It was in 1845 that the New Testament teaching about believers' immersion first reached Sweden in a more definite way. Captain G. W. Schroeder, another Swedish sailor, who had been converted and baptized by immersion in New York the previous year, returned to his native city of Gothenburg. A conversation between the two sailors led Nilsson to search the Scriptures more thoroughly.[5] To his astonishment he found no support for infant sprinkling in the New Testament, although he had been accustomed to suppose it was there. This discovery filled him with anxiety. After two years of mental struggle and suffering he and his wife became fully convinced that they ought to be immersed. They knew full well that the taking of such a step might lead to their banishment from the country. But the seeking of divine guidance through fasting and prayer made obedience to God and his will, as they conceived it, the all important issue of their lives.

In all Sweden, however, there was no one who could administer the ordinance. He therefore went to Hamburg, Germany, and was immersed in the river Elbe by John G. Oncken, Aug. 1, 1847. As was to be expected, many of his former friends and converts now turned against him. He had become a heretic, a dangerous Anabaptist, which in their view was the worst that could happen. But, as always in times of storm, the Word of God grew and multiplied. The Baptist church of Hamburg sent A. P. Förster, a Danish minister, to Sweden, and on September 21, 1848, he immersed the wife of Nilsson, two of his brothers and two other believers in the Gulf of Cattegat near Gothenburg. The same night the first Baptist church in the kingdom of Sweden was organized.[6]

Persecution soon broke upon the little company of immersed believers. It was of a threefold nature: by the mob, the ecclesiastical powers and the civil authorities.[7] The state church clergy had a powerful weapon in the "konventikelplakat" of 1726, which was especially aimed at dissenters, forbidding as it did all public religious worship outside of the state church. In July of 1849 Nilsson was brought before the consistory at Gothenburg and warned not to continue in the Baptist way. But the preacher continued to proclaim the gospel and make new disciples; and the ecclesiastical authorities, becoming greatly alarmed, apparently made up their mind to destroy the new heresy, root and branch.

---

[4] J. Bystrom, *En Frikyrklig Banbrytare,* pp. 24–32.

[5] G. W. Schroeder, op. cit. p. 102. Nilsson Autobiographical notes.

[6] J. Bystrom, op. cit. p. 42 f.

[7] N. J. Nordstrom, *Svenska Baptistsamfundets Historia,* Vol. 1, p. 61. See also *A Pioneer Trio* by J. O. Backlund; and *Swedish Baptist Work in Iowa,* pp. 340–385.

On New Year's Day of 1850 Nilsson, at one of the Baptist homes, led a little group of believers in religious worship. In the evening a mob, armed with clubs, pistols, old rusty swords, sticks and muskets, entered the house, and with curses and kicks seized the preacher and brought him before the sheriff. At midnight he was thrown into jail.

> It was a very dismal dungeon without a bed and without heat. The cold was very severe that night. I was forced to run back and forth until morning to keep from freezing to death. But God was with me! None of my friends could see me, and I was not allowed to write my wife during the seven days I spent here.[8]

A month later, Feb. 11, 1850, the Baptist preacher received a summons to appear before the lower court of appeal (Göta Hovrätt) at Jönköping, to answer the charge of disseminating heretical doctrines contrary to "the true evangelical faith." He remained ten days at Jönköping and appeared twice before the court, on the 8th, and again on the 11th of March. His dignified, straightforward and humble statement of his religious beliefs won the admiration of the court, and many of the spectators in the crowded hall of justice were moved to tears. Yet, under the law then existing, the court had no alternative but to condemn the Baptist preacher to "perpetual banishment from the kingdom."[9]

Nilsson Goes Into Exile

Appeals to the supreme court and to the kindhearted king Oscar I were unavailing. But unfortunate as the sentence of banishment was for the preacher, it turned into victory for the Baptist faith and for the cause of religious liberty in Sweden. On his way to and from Jönköping Nilsson made an extended missionary tour. Even during the week of trial he preached every evening to great crowds. Furthermore, while at Stockholm to seek pardon from the king he met and conversed with several of the pietists who later became Baptist leaders. Moreover, his case attracted a great deal of attention throughout the length and breadth of the land.

On July 4, 1851, Nilsson and his wife left their friends in Sweden, approximately sixty immersed believers,[10] and went to Denmark. Two years later the exiled preacher with twenty-one Swedish Baptists set out to seek liberty on the friendly shores of the New World. They left Gothenburg in the middle of May and landed in New York, June 24, 1853. It is easy to imagine what the exiled preacher and his persecuted friends must have felt this Midsummer Day as they stepped ashore in America where they were to enjoy liberty to worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience. After a few days the party proceeded westward, with Nilsson as guide,[11] by way of Chicago to Rock Island. Here some of them stayed while others went up the Mississippi river to Houston, Minn., where they formed a church in August, 1853. For reasons not so clear, Nilsson returned to New York, where he spent the rest of the summer and the early fall. In September he received an appointment from the American Baptist Home Mission Society to do missionary work among the Swedes. It appears that New York City was considered a most fertile recruiting ground, and accordingly the various denominational groups engaged colporteurs to work among the immigrants and seamen.

---

[8] Nilsson's autobiographical notes.

[9] Nilsson's autobiographical notes. Anderson, *The Baptists in Sweden,* p. 69.

However, the trend of Swedish immigration was toward the Mississippi Valley. And it was in this region that F. O. Nilsson was to spend the next seven years, perhaps the most happy and fruitful of his life, as a frontier preacher and founder of Swedish Baptist churches. In company with P. Nordell and his family, who had recently arrived from Sweden, Nilsson came to Rock Island on Thursday, Oct. 20, 1853, and the following Monday he left for a short visit with his friends at Houston, Minn. Here was a real need of the comfort and ministries of the gospel. For poverty and sickness had spread gloom and discouragement among the little group of pioneers. Being urged to stay with them, the preacher returned to Rock Island November 19, with the intention of bringing his wife up to La Crosse, Wis., twenty miles from Houston, and making this place their headquarters for the winter. However, due to unusually low water in the Mississippi river the trip had to be postponed until the following spring.

But another door was opened. The year before, Gustaf Palmquist had been doing missionary work among the Swedes at Burlington and the Skunk River (New Sweden) settlement in Iowa. He now advised Nilsson to enter this field, and in the first part of December he went to Burlington where he spent the winter. In spite of frail health—the asthma often kept him awake with a continuous coughing—and in spite of a determined opposition from another religious group who warned the Swedes of the false prophet, Nilsson had the joy to report: "The Lord has done a mighty work of grace. Several young people have found peace with God."[12]

---

[10] Nilsson's autobiographical notes. Bystrom, op. cit. p. 163, gives the number of Baptists in Sweden at that time as 53, and Nordstrom, op. cit. p. 82, as 52.

[11] Nilsson's autobiographical notes. Whether Nilsson actually followed the immigrants to Rock Island, or returned to New York after three days in Chicago, cannot be determined from the sources.

Writing to his friend Wiberg on March 6, 1854, he brought the good news that he had immersed twenty-three believers, twelve of these in Burlington, and eleven at the New Sweden settlement.[13] But what was good news to some caused consternation and bitter opposition by others. On the frontier Christian toleration did not extend outside of one's own group. The great Lutheran leader Hasselquist and a Methodist preacher by the name of Källman appeared on the scene to defend infant baptism, and warn the people of the Anabaptists, these wolves in sheep's clothing.[14] The Baptists, however, were determined to live and make use of the religious liberty granted them in the United States, and on Monday evening, March 20, 1854, Nilsson and Gustaf Palmquist organized a Swedish Baptist church of eleven members at New Sweden.[15] The following Sunday, March 26, a church composed of thirteen members was formed in Burlington.[16]

Of Nilsson it can truthfully be said, "In journeyings often." His was a restless soul. In the early part of the summer of 1854 he made a second trip to Minnesota, visiting all the more important Swedish and Norwegian settlements of the territory. "No part," he writes, "of the entire Mississippi Valley is as suitable for Swedes as Minnesota."[17] On September 11 of the same year he went north for the third time and spent the winter of 1854–1855 in St. Paul. Having his headquarters here, he made occasional preaching tours to all the Scandinavian settlements in the Territory.

Life on the frontier involved hardship and sacrifices which only the bravest were willing to make. In the words of Nilsson:

---

[12] Gunnar Westin, *Ur den Svenska Folkväckelsens Historia,* 3:2, pp. 126–129. This work, in two volumes, by Gunnar Westin of the faculty of Uppsala, is a collection of letters by Swedish Baptist pioneers, 1850–1855, and constitutes very valuable source material. See also Home Mission Record, New York, Febr., 1854, p. 19; March, 1854, p. 23.

[13] Westin, op. cit. p. 142. *Home Mission Record,* April, 1854, p. 27.

[14] Westin, op. cit. pp. 156–158.

[15] Westin, op. cit. Letter by G. Palmquist to A. Wiberg. Another date of organization, May 23, 1854, found on the blank leaf in the pulpit Bible, is evidently incorrect.

[16] Westin, op. cit. p. 158.

[17] Letter to Wiberg, July 20, 1854 in Westin op. cit. p. 208. See also E. Norelius, *De Svenska Luterska Församlingarnas Historia i Amerika,* p. 564.

> To be sure, we have in this country no religious persecution, and yet, there are difficulties, especially here in the West, that very few can realize: Rough roads, trackless prairies and primeval forests, where often it becomes necessary to lodge for the night under the open sky, with watch-fires to keep the wolves away.[18]

There were other trials, however, of a different nature and undoubtedly more difficult to bear. Nilsson complains that Lutheran and Methodist preachers did their best—"rather their worst"—to "counteract the truth" and make the people fear the Baptist heretic, saying that he was a godless and dangerous seducer who had deserted the religion of his fathers. St. Paul, which at that time was but a small outpost on the frontier, he found to be rather stony soil for religious propaganda. In a pessimistic mood he continues in his letter to Wiberg:

> Under such conditions it is not strange that only a very few attend my services, more especially since we have no other meeting place than a small and dilapidated school house, where I have to be my own janitor and with my own money buy the wood for heating purposes.[19]

The following five years constituted perhaps the happiest period in the life of the storm-tossed sailor. His Burlington friends, almost all of whom were his spiritual children, had decided to migrate to Minnesota. In the summer of 1855 they settled at beautiful Clear Water Lake, about twenty miles west of Minneapolis. They called the place Scandia, and here they organized a church on Aug. 1, 1855. Nilsson was chosen pastor of the little flock. Here the exiled Baptist preacher was to enjoy two of the greatest privileges that America offered to the sons of the Old World: religious liberty and possession of land. In his diary for March 20, 1857, he writes: "Thanks be to God who now in my 48th year has permitted me to become the possessor of an earthly home of my own."[20] It was a tract of 160 acres of fruitful Minnesota land.

In the course of nearly five years, with Scandia as headquarters, Nilsson proclaimed the gospel far and wide in the scattered Swedish communities. Churches were organized in several places: Chisago Lake, Wastado, Carver and Grove City.[21] He was too restless, however, to remain long in any particular place. Homesickness got the best of him, and the exile took his life in his hand and returned to Sweden. This was in 1860. He received a pardon[22] from the king, Charles XV, and then spent nine years in his native land, seven of these (1861–1868) as the first pastor of the Baptist church of Gothenburg.

---

[18] Letter to A. Wiberg, Dec. 18, 1854, in Westin, op. cit. p. 262. *Home Mission Record,* Dec., 1854, p. 59; March 1855, p. 15.

[19] Westin, op. cit. p. 263.

[20] F. O. Nilsson's Diary.

[21] It is not sure that Nilsson actually founded the Chisago Lake Church. But he made several visits to this settlement, and in his Diary for Sept. 5, 1859, he states that there was a membership of 21 in the church.

A Sick Soul

The man who successfully had weathered the storm of religious persecution nearly perished in the tempest of doubt and skepticism. During the last twelve years of his life, until his death Oct. 21, 1881, Nilsson lived in Houston, Minn. This was a period of mental and spiritual darkness. He lost his faith in some of the essential teachings of Christianity, and became an active member of "The Swedish Free Religious Society" of Houston, which, among other things, denied the divine inspiration of the Bible and the deity of the Lord Jesus.[23]

Here was a sick soul. To the student of psychology it would be of interest to make a thorough study of this case of spiritual pathology. But a brief attempt at an explanation will necessarily suffice. There are temptations peculiar to old age. As the shadows of life are lengthening, and a younger generation gradually pushes to the front and thus displaces the old leaders, it is easy for bitterness and suspicion to spring up in the heart that is old and weary. In the case of Nilsson we can discover at least three reasons for his spiritual decline. In the first place, impaired health—for the last twenty-five years of his life—had undoubtedly affected his mental balance and made him unstable and vacillating. In the second place, as pastor in Gothenburg and during his second period in America, he complained that he was not appreciated by his brethren and that younger men crowded him out. Nourishing these thoughts, his soul became an easy prey to other evil influences. In the third place, the seeds of skepticism planted in his mind when still unconverted, through the reading of Thomas Paine, and later Victor Rydberg and Theodore Parker, found nourishment in the heart already embittered by life's struggle. He turned to Unitarian writers for satisfaction to his restless spirit.

But the grace of God, marvelous grace, reached down to the storm-tossed sailor, and once more lifted him up from the deep waters. Four days before his death, on Oct. 17, 1881, he wrote to his friend Schillerstrom: "Jesus Christ is my only hope; on that rock will I rest, who has saved me."[24]

---

[22] Nilsson's pardon is one of many important historical documents in the valuable collection now kept at Bethel Seminary, St. Paul.

[23] See Constitution of "The Swedish Free Religious Society" in Nilsson's Diary.

GUSTAF PALMQUIST

Frontier conditions constituted one of the strong creative forces in the development of American churches. "The pioneer is always an independent individualist, determined to go his own way in religion as well as in politics,—and the frontier supplied that challenge to the heroic without which Christianity seems never to have been able to perform its best work."[25] Attracted by the freer life and the greater democracy of the frontier, it was natural that the Baptist people should be found in the front ranks among religious pioneers. In the fifties and sixties, when the Swedish people began to seek homes in the New World, they settled mostly in the Middle West, building homes for themselves in the primeval forest or on the wide prairie. Thus it came about that the early Swedish Baptists of America were largely a frontier people. The characteristics of a trail blazer and true pioneer are very pronounced in the noble founder of Swedish Baptists of America, Gustaf Palmquist.

Early Life in Sweden

Gustaf Palmquist was born May 26, 1812, in Solberga parish, Småland, that province in Sweden which has become especially known for its energetic and thrifty people, peculiarly responsive to religious revivalism. It was a time of gross and dense spiritual darkness all over Sweden. Truly converted people—"läsare"—were few and far between. One of these, however, was the mother of Gustaf Palmquist. Being convicted of sin, she had turned to the parish priest for advice. He told her to be at ease, that she had nothing to fear, for she had all her life been a pious and God-fearing woman. But God used an old widow, who by her neighbors was held in contempt and considered very queer in religious matters, to lead the sin-stricken mother to the Good Shepherd.

Now began that work of grace which ultimately culminated in the founding of the Swedish Baptists of America. For here was a mother who prayed all her children, five boys and two girls, into the kingdom of God, though the two youngest boys, Gustaf and Per, did not come to a full assurance of God's saving grace until eight years after their mother's death. After twenty years of religious seeking and much spiritual labor, Gustaf Palmquist, at the age of thirty-two, finally found peace for his soul. This happened in January 1844, in the city of Stockholm, where for ten years he had held a good position as instructor in a teachers college (normal school). The prolonged seeking after the assurance of salvation constitutes an interesting phase of religious psychology. It was inherent in the old-time Lutheran tenets that one must labor, long and hard, under the law, before the joy of God's redeeming grace could be obtained. Wesley's teaching of instantaneous regeneration was but little known in Sweden at that time.

---

[24] This letter is published "in toto" in L. J. Ahlstrom's *Swedish Baptist Work in Iowa*, p. 377.

[25] W. W. Sweet, *The Story of Religions in America*, pp. 5–6.

The two brothers, so quiet and backward before, immediately began to testify of their Savior. Among students in the college, at the county jails of Stockholm, and among the poor and the outcasts, covered with filth and rags, Gustaf Palmquist proclaimed the gospel of salvation in sermon and song.[26]

Palmquist Goes to America and Becomes a Baptist

He had been faithful in a few things. The Lord of the harvest now had a larger field prepared for him. Two factors determined the direction of his life at this time: his introduction to the revival movement which was led by the gifted Pastor F. G. Hedberg of Finland, and his meeting in Stockholm with the exiled Baptist preacher, F. O. Nilsson. In the province of Helsingland, northern Sweden, there was a group of believers, followers of Pastor Hedberg, who, in order to escape persecution, decided to emigrate to America.[27] Palmquist was asked to accompany them and become their pastor. He realized his own insufficiency for the task and that it would mean the giving up of a good position in his native land for a life of sacrifice on the American frontier. Nevertheless, the opportunity seemed providential and he dared not refuse.[28]

In the summer of 1851 he bade farewell to Sweden and landed in New York the latter part of August. Disappointment, however, met him upon his arrival in the New World. His prospective church was scattered over three states, and he found himself without a position in a strange land. But Palmquist had the spirit of the true pioneer and refused to be discouraged. He never regretted that he had come to America, for he was sure that God had called him here for a specific task.

---

[26] On the life of Gustaf Palmquist see *Pioneer Trio* by J. O. Backlund, pp. 7–40. *En Korsets Härold* by Per Palmquist and A. Drake, 160 pp. *Små Ax från Guds Åkerfält,* pp. 1–148. *Betlehem,* 1887, pp. 59–69. *Efter Sjuttio År* by C. G. Lagergren, pp. 9–14. *Jubileumsboken, 75th Anniversary of Swedish Baptists of America,* Aug. 23–28, 1927, pp. 49–53.

[27] A member of this group of immigrants was E. Norelius who later became a prominent clergyman and historian in the Swedish Lutheran Church. See E. Norelius, *De Svenska Luterska Församlingarnas Historia,* p. 38 f.

[28] Letter by G. Palmquist to A. Wiberg, Jan. 15, 1850, in Westin, *Ur den Svenska Folkväckelsens Historia,* 3:1, pp. 70–73.

After a few weeks in New York Palmquist journeyed west and made Rock Island, Illinois, his headquarters. He did not wait to be sent forth, but went forth as a herald of the cross, seeking out his countrymen both near and far, nursing the physically ill and pointing the sin-sick to the Lamb of God. But not without discouragement to be sure. To a friend he wrote at this time: "Strife, temptation, trials and tribulations make me tired with this life, my courage grows weak, but I would not give up, I will go on, I will press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."[29]

In the spring of 1852, having returned from a two month's journey to several scattered Swedish communities in Iowa, Wisconsin and Minnesota, Palmquist heard of a great work of grace in the American Baptist Church of Galesburg, Illinois. He went there to see and experience for himself. The seed of Baptist faith, planted in his heart while he was still in Sweden, was now to bear fruit. The result was that Gustaf Palmquist was immersed on June 27, 1852. In six weeks there were one hundred and six who followed the Lord in baptism at this place, twenty-one of these being Swedes. A month later, July 27, 1852, Palmquist was ordained by the Galesburg church into the gospel ministry.

The Swedish Baptist Founder

The American Baptist Church of Galesburg, where he was ordained, also called and commissioned Palmquist, without salary, to preach the gospel to the Swedes. He now returned to Rock Island. As was to be expected; the fires of opposition became intensified. Most of the Swedes, according to his own words, were afraid of the Baptist preacher and heretic. But he was confident of victory. Exactly forty-seven days after his own baptism he organized the first Swedish Baptist church in America. Only three members, two men and one woman! Undoubtedly it was the smallest church ever launched in our denomination. The little group has now grown to a company of some forty-seven thousand. The day of beginning was August 13, 1852, and the place was Rock Island, Illinois. Palmquist became the first pastor of the little flock, serving for some time without any salary.[30] From February

---

[29] Letter by Palmquist to a friend, Rock Island, Ill., March 24, 1852. Westin 3:1, op. cit., p. 98. See also *A Pioneer Trio* by J. O. Backlund, pp. 45–77; and *Swedish Baptist Work in Iowa* by L. J. Ahlstrom, pp. 295–321.

[30] "Femtio År, 1852–1902," an address by Frank Peterson. Westin, *Ur den Svenska Folkväckelsen,* 3:2, p. 87. See also *Home Mission Record,* July 1853, p. 43.

1, 1853, The American Baptist Home Mission Society paid him two hundred dollars annually, and later increased it to four hundred dollars.

In October 1854 Palmquist moved to New York where he labored as a city missionary among the immigrants for about a year. Due to the unfriendly attitude of representatives of other denominations—they called him a heretic from the bottomless pit—he did not find this field to his liking. But most certainly God had sent his servant to New York. For while there he had the joy of leading a young immigrant, Knut Oscar Broady, to Christ. This convert later became the first president of the Bethel Seminary in Stockholm, and one of the foremost religious leaders in Sweden.

Back in his beloved Rock Island in the fall of 1855, Palmquist divided his time between this place and Chicago, where a Swedish Baptist church had been organized one year before. One month was spent in Chicago, and one in Rock Island. Missionary work was also begun in Moline, where several Swedish Baptists were living. This was the preacher's ordinary program: Sunday school in Rock Island at nine, preaching service at eleven; and after lunch, another service at three in the afternoon. Then he walked three miles over to Moline where he held a service in the evening. On a cold winter night, as he trudged through the snowdrifts back home from a service, he was caught in a blizzard and contracted a severe cold which developed into a chronic disease which ten years later ended his useful life. For the Swedish Baptists in America he gave his life, his all.

Palmquist could not take it easy. From early morning, after communion with his heavenly Father, until late at night, he was constantly engaged, far and wide, rendering spiritual as well as physical aid to his fellow countrymen. His working program included religious services every evening, spiritual conversations, baptisms, a wide correspondence of an almost exclusively religious and deeply spiritual nature, and numerous house to house visitations. In the summer of 1857 he returned to Sweden where he spent the last ten years of his life. On September 18, 1867, the faithful pioneer fell asleep in Jesus.

Frank Peterson who as a little boy often heard Gustaf Palmquist preach has given us the following characterization of the founder: "Gustaf Palmquist had many qualities which contributed to the making of a successful preacher. He was a man of medium build, and had a well porportioned physique. He had a well built face of strong but pleasing features. His keen, speaking eyes attracted immediate attention, and his musical voice gave pleasure to his audience as he proceeded with his sermon. It did not take his hearers long before they discovered that they had before them a man of wide knowledge, whose message poured forth from his heart's conviction."[31] Eric Norelius, the great Lutheran leader and historian, whom Palmquist knew both in Sweden and America, very aptly characterized the Baptist founder in the following way:

> Palmquist was a person with a lovable character, being a talented preacher and extraordinarily friendly in his social intercourse. He knew how to get along with others, and attracted the young people with evening schools and the teaching of singing. It was evident that he soon would win for his new faith the majority of such whom he had befriended and who had confidence in him.[32]

ANDERS WIBERG

"Though, of course, not without human frailties, it can nevertheless be said of Anders Wiberg that any church might well consider itself fortunate to number a man of his type among its members."[33] Wiberg was not the father of Swedish Baptists; for Baptists have no fathers in the sense of some other denominations. It is evident, however, that God had called him and specially endowed him to be a founder and leader of Baptists in Sweden. He was an organizer, a scholar and a gifted writer, and without his wise leadership it would have been difficult for the infant denomination to survive. Twice Wiberg visited America, each time for a period of three years, and here, too, his organizing ability and his literary labors became a creative factor in the early life of Swedish Baptists.

Formative Years[34]

Wiberg came from Norrland, that part of Sweden which has produced so many eminent Baptist leaders. He was born July 17, 1816, in the village of Wi, Tuna parish, near the city of Hudiksvall. His original name was Anders Erickson, but, in accordance with a Swedish custom, his name was changed to Wiberg (the mountain of Wi) in order to suggest the place of his birth. At the age of seven he lost his father, and his mother, a deeply pious and very intelligent woman, became alone responsible for his early training.

---

[31] *Jubileumsboken* p. 52. This volume is a collection of proceedings and addresses at the Diamond Jubilee Celebration of Swedish Baptists in Chicago, August 23–28, 1927.

[32] Norelius, op. cit., p. 157.

[33] Stephenson, op. cit. p. 79.

[34] See *"Anders Wibergs Liv och Verksamhet,"* second revised and improved edition, Stockholm, 1916. This biography which is written by Wiberg's son-in-law, Jonas Stadling, is based very largely upon Wiberg's own manuscript diary, covering the period from March 5, 1844 to July 30, 1887. See also J. O. Backlund, *A Pioneer Trio*, pp. 81–124; and L. J. Ahlstrom, *Swedish Baptist Work in Iowa*, pp. 322–339.

That the God of providence often directs human destinies through the smaller events of life and by apparently insignificant details, is evident in the boyhood experiences of Wiberg. A merchant of Hudiksvall once visited the home, and observing the intelligent expression of little Anders, he said to the mother, "This boy ought to get an education." (Denne gosse borde studera). This statement became prophetic. For the boy was sent to school, where he received the best education Sweden could offer, and took his degree at the University of Uppsala. Though the young man himself did not realize it, God was preparing him to lead, by divine grace, the Baptists in Sweden to unexpected accomplishments.

The second, and by far the most important, formative influence in Wiberg's life was his conversion. At fourteen he was in imminent danger of drowning, and was saved from death by what seemed almost a miracle. This led him to think seriously of his eternal interest. He began reading the Bible and other religious books. Later on, in the midst of university life, these serious impressions disappeared. It was popular with young students to scoff at religion, and young Wiberg became an infidel. But God's grace reached down to him. A Christian friend, Samuel Svenson, came to his room one evening and tried to point the young student to Christ. His friend told him, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." These words pierced his heart, and he fell on his knees confessing his sins. But for three long years he continued, as was quite common for one with a Lutheran background, under the bondage of the law, until finally he was able to look up to the cross, where he found peace and justification by faith in the Crucified One. This was in the winter of 1842. At that time he did not know of a single true believer in the city of Uppsala. He had to stand alone.[35]

The fact that Wiberg for eight years served as a minister in the Lutheran state church became a third creative factor in his life. Having received a thorough training, he was ordained (prästvigd) into the state church June 11, 1843. With consecrated enthusiasm the young preacher, now twenty-seven years old, entered on his God-appointed task. In his first pastoral charge he was assistant to an older pastor who was a notorious drunkard and spent most of his time in bed in a state of intoxication. Nevertheless, young Wiberg wrote in his diary:

---

[35] *Anders Wibergs Liv,* op. cit. pp. 17, 25.

> Here I passed some of the happiest days of my life. I preached in two churches every Sunday, forenoon and evening, and every week-day evening in various villages in the two parishes, and great crowds gathered for the services.[36]

People from several provinces were attracted, and the blessings of the Lord accompanied his labors. Naturally this brought criticism from the state church pastors, who declared that his preaching turned people insane. Ere long Wiberg discovered that the state church was a church that persecuted the saints of God and had no place for a converted minister. Twice he was summoned before the consistory of Uppsala for the spreading of false teachings. The first time he was suspended for three months. The second time, his accuser, Dean Bostrom of Hudiksvall, urged his banishment from the kingdom. But while the case was pending, his accuser hanged himself by the cord of the chimney damper in his study. The case against Wiberg was then dropped.[37]

The other discovery Wiberg made within the state church was that it is unscriptural to administer the Lord's supper to unbelievers. On the 19th of May 1850, he preached his last sermon in a Lutheran church, and the following spring he resigned as pastor in the state church. Let us never suppose that this step was an easy one for the young preacher! Position, friendship and even daily bread were all sacrificed on the altar of truth and conscience. This loyalty to truth, no matter what the cost, constitutes the chief trait in his life and work.

In the period of transition, 1850–1852, when Wiberg had no definite income and lived in great poverty and distress, God directed his life into a long and useful service. He came in contact with Baptists. This became the fourth formative factor in his life. In his circle of believing friends in Stockholm there were some who had begun to be interested in the subject of baptism. The visit of F. O. Nilsson, now sentenced to exile for his Baptist views, at the capital city in the spring of 1850 brought this question to the front. Wiberg, however, was still a strict Lutheran in regard to infant baptism.

An important journey was the next step in God's training of his servant. In the spring of 1851 Wiberg had the opportunity to accompany his friend D. Forssell on a business trip to Hamburg as interpreter of German. While here he visited the Baptist church and became acquainted with the preachers Oncken and Köbner. The piety of the Baptists appealed to him, and the constitution and discipline of the church appeared to be framed on the apostolic model. But to their views of baptism he could not assent. On his return to Sweden he determined to make a thorough study of the whole question, and then write a book to refute the Baptists. Here came the surprise of his life. He discovered not a word about infant baptism in the New Testament. Only believers' immersion. The book was written, "Who Should be Baptized? And What is Baptism?" being published in the summer of 1852. It turned out to be an epoch making book in defense of New Testament baptism, and this even before Wiberg himself had become a Baptist. This book became a foundation stone of Swedish Baptist faith and life in both Sweden and America.

---

[36] Ibid. p. 26.

[37] Ibid. pp. 72, 73, 76, 77, 81.

Wiberg in America

A sea voyage was advised by the physician to restore his frail health, and Wiberg's friends, D. Forssell and B. H. Lundvall, gave him free passage from Stockholm to New York. On his way to America, while the ship stopped a few days at Copenhagen, Wiberg was immersed in the Baltic sea at midnight of July 23, 1852, by F. O. Nilsson. It appears providential that F. O. Nilsson, who organized the first Baptist church in Sweden and who now was exiled for his faith, was to have the privilege of baptizing the man who was to become the real founder of Baptists in Sweden.

In a letter to his friend P. Palmquist of Stockholm July 29, 1852, Wiberg relates his experiences relative to his baptism. It is impossible, in reading this letter, not to be profoundly impressed with the prominent place of prayer—prayer at four different times in connection with the baptismal service—as well as a wholehearted consecration to God that characterized our Baptist pioneers. He writes:

> We found Nilsson. The same evening there was to be a prayer meeting in the Baptist chapel. Here we arrived at 9 o'clock. Many dear brethren and sisters were assembled. Nilsson related my case to the church. We all fell on our knees, and the church prayed for me. Then a passage in the Bible regarding baptism was read. I was asked to state my beliefs, not by a set formula, but from the heart. This I did, and answered some questions. Again the church united in prayer for me. Thereupon we walked about two miles outside the city to the seashore where I put on a white baptismal robe. I fell on my face to the ground, and all the brethren and sisters surrounded me, they also with their faces to the ground. After the prayer Nilsson went with me into the water above my waist and immersed me in the waves in

> the name of the triune God, after which I was lifted up. We then dressed, and prayers were made in the same way as before the baptism, also the laying on of hands by Nilsson. On the way back I had the happiest walk in my life.[38]

Saturday, September 18, he arrived in New York and set his foot for the first time on American soil. The land of the free! "Oh, my God," he exclaimed, "what a gift is liberty."[39] He was cordially received at the Baptist Mariners' Church, and on the very day of his arrival "he was engaged in helping immigrants to get employment, collecting money to help those without means, and visiting the sick." In New York Wiberg labored, in true apostolic fashion, as colporteur in the service of the American Baptist Publication Society.

The following spring, April 14, 1853, he set out on an extended tour of the Swedish settlements in the Mississippi Valley. He was present and preached the sermon at the service of recognition in the Rock Island church, May 5, 1853, and visited Burlington, New Sweden, Village Creek, and other places, both in Iowa and Illinois, everywhere preaching Christ and helping his countrymen to build on the foundation of the New Testament. After an absence of two months and nine days Wiberg returned to New York, on June 23, 1853, the day before the arrival of F. O. Nilsson and the twenty-three Baptists who had left Sweden on account of persecution.

The next two years, which Wiberg spent in Philadelphia, became very fruitful in literary productions. His friend George Scott had told him twelve years before that God had called him to be an author. This was now beginning to come true. Books and tracts, expounding the Baptist faith, flowed in an ever increasing number from his pen. Thus a doctrinal foundation deep and strong was laid for Swedish Baptists on both sides of the Atlantic.

> In the midst of many duties the Swedish missionary found time for courtship. On May 5, 1855, he recorded in his diary that he had fasted and prayed all day in preparation for suing for the hand of Caroline Lintemuth, a woman five years his senior, who had been brought up in the German Lutheran church. After several meetings, at which they knelt in prayer for divine guidance, he recorded on May 23, 'Sister Caroline promised to go with me to Sweden.' A month later the happy man was appointed superintendent of colportage in Sweden at a salary of six hundred dollars a year, under the auspices of the American Baptist Publication Society. On the

---

[38] Ibid. p. 101.

[39] Letter by Wiberg to P. Palmquist, Sept. 23, 1852, in Westin, *Den Svenska Folkväckelsen,* 3:1, p. 146.

eighth of September, 1855, he sailed for Sweden with his bride of two weeks and arrived at Stockholm October 7, where he was greeted not only by anxious Baptists but by warnings against heresy from both press and pulpit.[40]

Until his death, which occurred November 5, 1887, he remained the recognized and beloved leader of Baptists in Sweden. In a frail body there dwelt a healthy soul. Wiberg was a man of great honesty and integrity, pronounced unselfishness and deep humility. Truly he walked with God.

[40] See Stephenson, op. cit. pp. 84–85.

CHAPTER FOUR

BEGINNINGS IN THREE STATES

FROM THE Great Awakening in 1734 until the end of the nineteenth century revivalism has manifested itself at frequent intervals in America. "In its earlier phases revivalism grew largely out of frontier conditions, and performed its best work in the newer sections of the country."[1] However, the metropolitan areas also received their share of the great spiritual outpouring. In those days a few people in New York City met to pray for a spiritual awakening, and as a result a mighty spirit of prayer swept over the land from Maine to California, resulting in the conversion of half a million souls in a single year. The Baptist people, in a peculiar way, owe their origin as well as their further growth and development to revivals. The Swedish Baptists are no exception to that rule, for it was in the times of revival that the early churches were planted.

ROCK ISLAND, THE CRADLE OF THE DENOMINATION

Fresh from a revival in Galesburg, and two days after his ordination which took place in Galesburg, Illinois, July 27, 1852, Gustaf Palmquist came to Rock Island to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to his countrymen. On the very first page of the record book of the Rock Island church we read:

> The Lord accompanied his word with his blessing and power, so that Bro. Palmquist had the privilege to baptize three willing followers of Christ, August 8, 1852—August Theodor Mankee,[2] Petter Soderstrom and Frederica Boberg. August 13 these mentioned persons formed themselves into a church, by name, the Swedish Baptist Church of Rock Island.[3]

---

[1] W. W. Sweet, *The Story of Religions in America,* New York, 1930, p. 8.

[2] Mrs. Mary Mankee, a Catholic, was converted and baptized a year later in the American Baptist church, and joined the Swedish church by letter April 21, 1854. She died the following September.—See Rock Island Record Book; also Westin, op. cit. 3:1, p. 208; 3:2, p. 245.

[3] This book, containing the minutes of the church from its beginning in 1852 to 1886, one of the treasures of the Swedish Baptist Historical Society, is kept at Bethel Seminary, St. Paul, Minn. The minutes, written in English the first three years, Theodor Mankee clerk, are unusually well kept.

It was indeed the day of small beginning, three members only! The church record book continues:

> September 26 Anders Boberg of Rock Island, Carl Johanson and Anders Norelius from Moline joined the church by baptism. And on April 17, 1853, Hans Smitt, Hans Mattson, Johan Henr. Asp, Johan Wilhelm Peterson, Carl Hakanson, Margareta Peterson, and Maria Christina Johanson joined the church by baptism.

The mighty Mississippi river, "The Father of Waters," served the Swedish Baptists as their first baptistry. Even in old age Frank Peterson, the grand old man of Swedish Baptists, distinctly remembered the scene and the event of the baptism of his parents on April 21, 1854. The six year old lad started to cry as he saw Gustaf Palmquist immerse his father in the river, evidently thinking that he would never see him again.

The little group of baptized believers were not long in seeking fellowship with Christians of the same faith. On Thursday morning, at 10:30, May 5, 1853, according to the record book, a council, representing five American Baptist churches, "convened in the meeting house of the First Baptist Church of Rock Island to consider the propriety of recognizing the Swedish Baptist Church." After the names of the thirteen members had been read, the articles of faith and covenant and an account of previous proceedings were presented and examined. It was then resolved to recognize the church as a "regular independent Baptist church." Anders Wiberg, at that time living in Philadelphia, was also present at this occasion, and in the evening he preached the sermon of recognition from Acts 9:11, "Behold he prayeth." That "all things were done decently and in order" in the little Rock Island church, is a good commentary on the orderly habits of the first pastor, Gustaf Palmquist.

On the fourth of July, 1853, being a Monday that year, the church met for one of its regular business meetings. Peter Soderstrom and Anders Norelius were elected deacons, and Mrs. F. Boberg and Caroline Asp deaconesses. It is of interest to note that they believed it to be Scriptural to have deaconesses in the church. And that they elected a standing committee of five "to converse with candidates for membership before being brought into the church,"[4] proves that they considered membership a serious matter. In a letter to Wiberg of November 1, 1852, Palmquist related how he felt led to refuse some applications for baptism, not being sure that the applicants were born again, even though they apparently were pious and loved to attend the services.[5] Every fourth Sunday a covenant meeting was to be held. It was also resolved "that anyone who traffics in, or uses as a common beverage, any kind of intoxicating liquors, can never be received as a candidate for membership of this church."[6]

---

[4] Record Book, July 4, 1853.

The early members were all poor. Yet Anders Wiberg in a letter to Palmquist of November 8, 1853, urges him to remind them of their duty to support the pastor. "There ought to be several who could give from one to more dollars annually toward your support."[7] But the kind-hearted Palmquist, writing to Wiberg November 21, 1853, says:

> As yet I have not received a single penny from my church, and rather than asking for anything under present conditions I would work for my support with my own hands. Most of the people have this year been sick and have had to go into debt, becoming a burden to others. Only with the greatest difficulty can they manage to get their daily bread. But we hope for better times, and as far as possible I want to cast all my burdens upon the Lord.[8]

That the little church had a will to live and faith in God and the future is evident from the fact that already on April 21, 1854, they appointed a building committee to arrange for the building of a meeting house. In August the following year a lot was purchased for two hundred dollars, located on Fifth avenue, between 20th and 21st streets. According to a statement in "History of Rock Island County," 1878 "the church was built in September, 1855, at a price of fifteen hundred dollars."[9] It was a small brick building with a seating capacity of seventy-five and ready for use the third Sunday of December, 1885.[10] However, the structure does not seem to have been completed until two years later.[11]

Faith and Life

The faith of our fathers, of the rank and file of the ordinary church members, can somewhat accurately be determined by the faith of the preachers and by the gospel they preached. The cross and the substitutionary death of Christ as an atonement for man's sin occupied the central place in their proclamation. Writing to the Rock Island church Palmquist says: "Jesus died in our stead, Jesus rose for our justification—is not this sufficient?" Christ as an example in daily living and the doctrine of sanctification through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, though not entirely overlooked, did not receive a proportionate share in their system of faith. Heaven and the future glory constituted, as always for the true saints, a great source of comfort and strength. Meditations like the following frequently occur in Palmquist's letters:

---

[5] Westin, op. cit. 3:1, p. 161.

[6] Record Book, July 4, 1853.

[7] Westin, op. cit. 3:2, p. 83.

[8] Westin, op. cit., pp. 87–88.

[9] Quoted in L. J. Ahlstrom, *Eighty Years of Swedish Baptist Work in Iowa 1853–1933*, Des Moines, Ia. 1933, p. 54.

[10] See *Det Gamla och Nya Hemlandet*, Dec. 22, 1855 and March 1, 1856. Galesburg and Chicago 1855–1914.

[11] *Nya Wecko-Posten*, August 31, 1892. Chicago 1884–1918. This is a Swedish Baptist weekly and contains much historical source material.

> I've Canaan's goodly land in view, and realms of endless day. Jerusalem! My glorious home! My soul still pants for thee. Then shall my labors have an end, when I thy joys shall see.[12]

The church kept a watchful eye upon the life and conduct of its members. Even though it might not always have been done in a spirit of wisdom and love, the fact that regular discipline was exercised proves a vigorous spiritual life within the church. Non-resident members must write to the church four times a year, or else be excluded. Because their conduct was a disgrace to the name of the Lord, and because they refused, in spite of all warning according to Matt. 18:15–17, to repent of their evil way, two women were excluded August 14, 1855. Another member was excluded because, contrary to the wish and standards of the church, she had attended a questionable entertainment, and still another was excluded because he had spread false rumors about an elder. Concerning believers' marriage to unbelievers the church expressed as its belief that this practice would be harmful to the spiritual life. Yet, Anders Wiberg, who was present at the business meeting July 1, 1864, did not think a member should be excluded for this offense, even though he considered it an evil and unbecoming to a Christian.[13]

In spite of every precaution, lukewarmness crept in among the members. In order to improve conditions it was proposed in March, 1858, that each member try to search his own heart and draw near to God. A few years later a committee was appointed to make a sort of every member canvass in order to ascertain the exact spiritual condition of each member. Even the teaching of sinless perfectionism, which was playing havoc with many Baptist churches in Sweden, infected the little flock in Rock Island in the early sixties, and several members were lost to the church by reason of this heresy.

---

[12] Westin, op. cit. 3:2, p. 77; *En Korsets Härold, Gustaf Palmquists Liv,* Stockholm 1889, pp. 61–79.

[13] Rock Island Record Book, July 1, 1864.

But God did not forsake his people. Through revivals as well as individual conversions new members were added. In 1874 the membership, then the largest in the history of this church, reached 165. One reason, no doubt, why the membership never reached beyond this number was that members constantly kept moving to other places. The pioneer spirit was much alive in the group. They believed in going to the next towns with the gospel story. In 1876 seventy-four members left to organize a Swedish Baptist church in Moline where regular religious services even from Palmquist's days had been conducted by the Rock Island Baptists. As early as 1853 some Swedes from the Rock Island area who had been influenced by the gospel and Baptist teachings and who had moved to Village Creek, Iowa, started a Baptist church in that place. Another migration occurred in 1869 when a group of Baptists from the mother church in Rock Island settled at Oakland, Nebraska. These became the founders of Swedish Baptist work of that state. And in 1889 the Davenport mission, a branch of the Rock Island church, organized an independent congregation in that city across the Mississippi from Rock Island.

Thus the mother church carried on and weathered the storms until, in 1930, the group had dwindled to a mere handful of members. These now decided to disband and unite with the local American Baptist church. The property also fell into the hands of this same corporation, much to the regret of Swedish Baptists everywhere who would have liked to retain the church building as a historic landmark. Finis was written. The First Church of Swedish Baptists of America is no more. But the work it started continues, and the mustard seed of only three members in August of 1852 has become a large tree with its branches stretching out around the whole world.

VILLAGE CREEK, IOWA

Ever since Thomas Hooker in 1636 left Boston to found a colony in the Connecticut valley, land hunger has been one of the predominant motives in the conquest of the American continent. The desire for religious freedom was a second motive, and the historian often finds it difficult to determine which of the two was the stronger. Motivated apparently by a desire to improve their lot in life, a company of Swedes migrated in 1851 to Village Creek, "the little Switzerland of Iowa," in

Allamakee County in the northeastern corner of the state. Like the Israelites of old, they first spied out the land. Eric Sandman, one of their number who then lived with his friends at McGregor, Iowa, some thirty miles southwest of Village Creek, was selected for this task.[14] Upon his return Sandman reported that he had found a beautiful valley, with high bluffs enclosing a narrow strip of bottom land, the soil of which had been washed down from the steep hill-sides. Through the valley flowed a bubbling brook, rich with fish, and there was an abundance of game in the surrounding woods. The place became known as the Village Creek Swedish settlement.

Our Oldest Church

Since the Rock Island church disbanded in 1930, the Village Creek church holds the distinction of being the oldest church of the denomination in existence. The Baptist faith soon reached this group of Swedish settlers in Iowa. In May and June of 1852, when Gustaf Palmquist made a trip to Minnesota, he spent a few days at Village Creek. Writing to his friend A. Wiberg of July 8, 1852, he says: "We spoke about baptism. But then he (Sandman) stood on Lutheran ground. Swedberg and Eric Sund incline toward the Baptist faith."[15] As will be remembered, Palmquist himself was not immersed until he came home from this trip. The first Baptist preacher to visit Village Creek was Anders Wiberg, a former minister in the Lutheran state church of Sweden. In the spring of 1853 he spent a few weeks with his friends in Illinois and Iowa, and reached Village Creek, Sunday May 29. He could stay only one day, but the seed sown fell into good soil and bore fruit.[16]

A few weeks later G. Palmquist received a letter from Sandman, Swedberg, and Sund of Village Creek, urging him to come and help them. He came and proclaimed the word of God with great power, and many turned to the Lord. On August 10, 1853, he immersed twelve believers and organized the Swedish Baptist church of Village Creek, the first one in Iowa and the second in America. While the first ten were immersed:

---

[14] In 1849 Sandman was sent to America by a group of readers (läsare) of whom A. Wiberg was the leader in Hälsingland, Sweden, to investigate the possibility of settling in America in order to escape the religious persecutions then raging in Sweden.

[15] Westin, op cit. 3:1, p. 124. Also a letter by G. Palmquist to E. Norelius in *De Svenska Lutherska Församlingarnas Historia i Amerika.* Rock Island, 1890, p. 156.

[16] Westin, op. cit. 3:1, p. 245.

> The spirit of God was at work on others who witnessed the sacred act. Two who had been very bitter against this re-baptizing, as they called it, were so impressed by witnessing the baptism that they, then and there, asked permission to give their experience and testimony of faith in Christ and follow Him in baptism. This was granted and they too were buried with Christ.[17]

A. G. Swedberg, one of their own number and a young man of 25 years who had been preaching among the Methodists, was chosen pastor, and Eric Sandman, deacon.

As in the Rock Island church, a committee was appointed to examine applicants for baptism and church membership. Joining the church was a serious matter with the pioneers, and much care was exercised so as to make sure that only truly born again people were received. Bible study always held a prominent place. A prayer meeting was held during the week, and a covenant meeting with the observance of the Lord's Supper once every month.

> The members were continually doing personal work, and the church received new members so that within one year they numbered 44. When uncertainties appeared about church discipline and doctrine they would call an extra meeting, bring their Bibles with them to study and pray for light and guidance.[18]

Revivals

The churches on the American frontier multiplied and grew strong through frequent revivals. In this respect the Village Creek church was a typical frontier church, for it became a center of some outstanding religious awakenings. A constant influx of Swedish settlers furnished excellent revival material. "In a radius of less than three miles of the church from fifty to sixty families had made their homes, old fashioned families consisting of from eight to ten members, besides single young men and women."[19] The first revival occurred in the winter of 1862. One of the members, John Peterson, apparently the father of Frank Peterson, gave an extensive account of this work of grace in a letter of February 10, 1862, to "Evangelisten," a Baptist monthly in Sweden:

---

[17] Diamond Jubilee address by pastor J. R. Lindblom, pastor of the Village Creek church, as quoted in Ahlstrom, *Eighty Years of Swedish Baptist Work in Iowa 1853–1933.* Des Moines, Iowa 1933, p. 73. See also Westin, *Letters,* op. cit. 3:2, p. 44.

[18] Ahlstrom, op. cit. p. 75.

[19] Ahlstrom, op. cit. pp. 75–76.

> Sunday, January 5, the first day of prayer week, we experienced the first pentecostal shower upon our poor Zion. Swedberg preached in the morning and Moore in the evening. Sinners began to ask, "What must I do to be saved?" and with bitter tears they confessed their sins and asked for mercy and forgiveness. This continued until late in the night—During the remaining days of prayer week the pleading and praying continued day and night. The young people were all, with few exceptions, converted to Christ—This revival is spreading far and wide round about us, so that it appears as if the times were at hand when all shall know the Lord.[20]

The second outpouring of the Holy Spirit came in 1873 and 1874. This revival was preceded by a great trial within the church which came in the form of Seventh Day Adventism. Their beloved pastor, A. G. Swedberg, who for some fourteen years had shepherded the flock, embraced adventism, and the church came near to dissolution. Olof Lindh of Rock Island came up to assist the discouraged Baptists, who were led to call another pastor, S. J. Sjogren; and under his leadership the church experienced a gracious awakening. Sinners were saved, and baptisms were frequent. The creek served as baptistery, and often thick ice had to be removed to make immersion possible. The pioneers were brave and hardy. No difficulty was too great to obey God. By June, 1874, 74 new converts had been baptized and received into the church, bringing the membership up to 135, the largest membership ever attained.[21] In 1886 the church experienced a third revival through which 27 members were added.[22]

On Aching Knees

The late Dr. Frank Peterson, well known and beloved among Swedish Baptists, was one of the converts in the first revival of the Village Creek Church. At that time he was a boy of fourteen. Vividly he pictures a typical prayer meeting among the early settlers:

> At prayer meeting it was sometimes customary to remain kneeling while one after another, as the spirit moved them, led in prayer. This would be kept up so long that the knees would ache until the worshiper had to change from one position to another, and at last he could think of nothing else but his aching knees and feel unpleasantly impatient of the long-winded petitioner.
>
> I recall upon one occasion when F. O. Nilsson came to Village Creek. He had walked ten miles from town to where the meeting was held and was

---

[20] *Evangelisten,* Stockholm, 1862, pp. 109–112.

[21] Ahlstrom, op. cit. pp. 79–80. O. Lindh, *Minnen,* Cambridge, 1907, pp. 82, 86, 91.

[22] *Nya Wecko-Posten,* op. cit. April 24, 1886, p. 4.

very tired. At the meeting one of those long seasons of prayer was begun. Nilsson lay until his knees ached so he could stand it no longer. He arose and said, "Brethren, let us intersperse our prayers with song and testimony. This long posture on aching knees takes the spirit of worship out of us. It reminds me of the torture that those doing penance impose upon themselves." Restless youngster that I was, I thought that rebuke, administered by Mr. Nilsson, was the most sensible thing of the meeting.[23]

Reaching Out

The Village Creek church early realized the importance of winning boys and girls for the Lord. In October 1861 a Sunday school was established for the expressed purpose of leading sinners to Christ. "The young people became interested and older Christians were revived. The prayer house could not hold the crowds." Even the Methodists and the Lutherans united with the Baptists in the Sunday school work—significant in those early days of much denominational prejudice—in order to make the name of Christ known among both Swedes and Americans.[24] Frank Peterson was one of the first pupils of this Sunday school. Later on Robert Earl, the future well known St. Paul physician, attended this same school of religious instruction.

Although so recently transplanted into foreign soil, the Swedes of Village Creek were intensely loyal and patriotic. The following ten men volunteered for service in the United States army during the Civil War: Frank Peterson, John Upström, Peter Sjödin, Olle Gustaf Anderson, Peter Olson Earl, Andrew Söderström, Eric Olson Earl, Peter Hector, Andrew Hector, and John A. Peterson. As the church numbered only 60 members, this was a high percentage of volunteers. When the church and Sunday school gathered, or whenever two or more members met, they always prayed for their "boys in blue," and their prayers were answered. For all the boys returned home except Andrew Söderström who became ill and died on his way home.[25]

World-wide missions also were close to the heart of the Village Creek church. The Tri-state Conference—Illinois, Iowa, and Minnesota—which held its first meeting in Rock Island, 1856, often convened at Village Creek. It was that conference which, in a sense, became the mother organization of the various state or district conferences in the entire country. Here, too, in 1879, steps were taken which the following year led to the formal organization of the Swedish Baptist

---

[23] *Jubileumsboken,* op. cit. pp. 46–47.

[24] *Evangelisten,* op. cit. p. 109.

[25] Ahlstrom, op. cit. p. 95.

General Conference.[26] In this church Erika Bergman, one of the first Swedish Baptist foreign missionaries, was converted. She sailed for South India in 1891. And, as stated above, Village Creek gave to the Baptists the missionary leader and statesman, Frank Peterson, who for some forty years served as secretary of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society.

Well may Swedish Baptists as they remember the early frontier days and this little church in the Switzerland of Iowa, join in the sentiments of the poet:

> There's a church in the valley by the wildwood,
> No lovelier place in the dale;
> No spot is so dear to my childhood
> As the little brown church in the vale.

HOUSTON, MINNESOTA

It was a little company of twenty-one Baptists, constituting about half of the membership of the only Baptist church in Sweden, that on May 6, 1853, together with several Baptist sympathizers, set out for America. The exiled F. O. Nilsson was their leader. On June 24, after a stormy voyage, they reached New York, where Anders Wiberg met them at the dock. They soon continued the journey westward, some of the party stopping at Chicago, others at Moline and Rock Island. Six families decided to go as far as Minnesota. Nine members of these were Baptists, becoming the nucleus of Swedish Baptists in the North Star State.[27] That little group has now grown to a host of nearly thirteen thousand.

Sufferings of the Pioneers

In their own home land they had read glowing reports, written by a young Swedish explorer, of Southeastern Minnesota as a land of fertile valleys, heavy timber, and rich and deep soil. The little company of immigrants reached La Crosse, Wisconsin, by steamboat from Rock

---

[26] General Conference Annuals maintain that the conference was organized in Village Creek, 1879. However, according to a statement in *"Minnen"* by O. Lindh, pp. 139–140, which we consider historically correct, the General Conference was not actually organized until 1880 in Moline, Illinois, at which meeting a constitution was adopted and officers for the first time elected. See also *"Evangelisk Tidskrift,"* Chicago 1877–1884, for 1879, pp. 158 and 220; for 1880, pp. 287, 343f.

[27] *A History of the Swedish Baptist Church of Houston, Minnesota.* Diamond Jubilee Celebration, August 3, 1928, pp. 4–5. See also *Protokollbok of Swedish Baptist Church of Houston,* p. 5. (Swedish Baptist Archives, St. Paul).

Island, and from there they made the last twenty-three miles up the Root river on foot. They found a large Indian village where the present town of Houston is located. This was on August 18, 1853.[28]

Two miles to the east, in the center of the valley later known as Swede Bottom, they pitched their tents. As earlier pilgrims to American shores so often had done before, it was perfectly natural, far removed as they were from all persecution for their faith and rejoicing in their new found religious liberty, that these Swedish Baptists would begin with a divine service. In the evening of the first day they assembled to give praise to God. This was probably the first religious service of Swedish Baptists in Minnesota.[29]

Little did they realize, these sturdy Swedes, how much they needed Christian fellowship and divine strength. For they were soon to experience all the hardships of pioneer life. Fever and ague sapped their physical vitality, and the task of providing a permanent shelter against the approaching winter was a slow and difficult one. Late in November one family still lived in a tent, and three other families were crowded together in a small shanty. A prairie fire burned all their hay, which they had put up for the winter, and most of the settlers were practically destitute. After a visit to Houston in the early part of November, F. O. Nilsson wrote to A. Wiberg November 22, 1853:

> What are they to live on since all their money is gone in a place where there is no opportunity of earning anything? I feel sorry for them. May the Lord have mercy and help them.[30]

The following January Wiberg reported that the kindhearted pastor Steward of the Mariners' Baptist Church, New York, had raised seventy dollars for the suffering Swedes in Houston.[31]

However, their cup of suffering was not yet full. In July, 1854, an epidemic of cholera visited the settlement and cut their number almost in half. Medical help was out of reach. In four days four of the wives and mothers were dead. Two or three of these young mothers left several small children. "They were martyrs to their faith just as much as those who have gone to a martyr's grave in a more public and dramatic way." Their remains were buried in the hillside a few rods to the west of the log cabins.[32]

---

[28] *Protokollbok,* op. cit. p. 5.

[29] Alex Abraham, *Recollections of the Pioneers,* p. 8. Mr. Abraham is a grandson of one of the original group at Houston, and has written an interesting account of the experiences of the early settlers as they were related to him. The Houston church now considers this service on August 18, 1853, as the date of the organization.

[30] Westin, op. cit. 3:2, p. 90.

[31] Ibid. p. 107.

Planting of the Cross

It was not a cross of wood like the one Columbus planted as he first set foot on the soil of the New World. But it was just as real, and certainly of a more spiritual and eternal value. As stated above, there were nine Baptists in the little group, the names of whom were as follows: Lars Redding and Anna Johanna Redding, Lars Johnson and Anna Brita Johnson, Johannes Anderson and Beata Anderson, Abraham Anderson and Birgita Anderson, and Inga Christina Berndtson. From August 18, 1853, the date of their arrival, until March 9, 1859, they seem to have met for public worship, and in a way functioned as a church, without any definite organization. On the latter date, however, they met to organize, or as the minutes have it, "reorganize."[33] Officers were elected, and the names of fifteen members, nine men and six women, were duly recorded.

That this was a church patterned after the New Testament is evident from several facts. In the first place, conversion as a condition of membership was carefully stressed. The minutes of a meeting on April 11, 1860, are interesting in this regard.

> Brother H. Wilson gave a confession of his faith, that the Lord in his grace had visited him a few weeks before and had led him to see that he was a child of perdition. But it had pleased the Lord to call him to repentance, and he had found peace with God through Jesus Christ.[34]

In the second place, believers' immersion, uniting with the church, and fellowship in the Lord's Supper, were stressed. The minutes read almost like a bit of history from the apostolic church:

> He (H. Wilson) desired to be baptized; through the reading of the Bible and the guidance of the Holy Spirit he had come to the conclusion that believers, and no others, were entitled to baptism by means of the

---

[32] *Houston History,* op. cit. pp. 16–17.

[33] Several dates for the origin of the Houston church have been given, such as August 18, 1853, the date of the arrival of the first group; November, 1853, which marked the first visit of F. O. Nilsson; and February 1855. It is safe to assume, however, that before March 9, 1859, there was no regularly organized Baptist church. For there were no records, no officers, and no one seemed to remember anything definite, even though it was a matter of only some six or seven years. See *Protokollbok* pp. 1–9.

[34] *Protokollbok* p. 10. *Nya Wecko-Posten,* June 20, 1900, p. 4.

dipping of the whole body in water according to the commandment of Christ. He was accepted for membership into the church.

In the third place, the Houston church was active in telling the good news of salvation not only in the local field but also unto the uttermost parts of the earth. It was a missionary church. Every so often we read in the early minutes about offerings for missions. Out of their great poverty they gave, in order to make possible the proclamation of the gospel to others.

Itinerant preachers visited Houston quite frequently. It was natural that their fellow-sufferer for the faith in Sweden and their spiritual father, F. O. Nilsson, would long to see them. In November of 1853 he made his first visit to Houston spending about two weeks there. Later he returned, time and again, until he finally came to make Houston his home, September 20, 1869. And here he spent the last twelve years of his life, part of this time as pastor of the church. Other early preachers were: L. L. Frisk, Andrew Norelius, Olaus Okerson, John Anderson and John Ongman. The church also had good leaders and speakers within their own group such as Abraham Anderson, Johannes Anderson, and John Hollstrom. During long intervals for some twenty years, or more, when the church was without a regular pastor, Johannes Anderson preached the Word and guided the church through many a storm. To him much credit is due for the continuation of the work during the early years.[35]

Strife and Division

Religion affects a very vital part in man. No doubt this explains why religious strife often becomes so intense. The Houston church is only one among many churches that have experienced difficulties leading to division. As is frequently true, the greater cause for the trouble lay in the leader. F. O. Nilsson, who had successfully weathered many storms of persecution in Sweden, embraced liberal teachings. The members who were dissatisfied with Nilsson's views withdrew on March 22, 1876, and organized a church with Johannes Anderson as pastor. For a long time the present Houston church regarded this year as the date of their organization. The two groups existed side by side a few years. Nilsson's followers were called Nilssonites.[36]

But, through trials and difficulties, the Lord led his people to victory. After some years unity and peace were again established. Souls

[35] *Houston History,* op. cit. p. 19.

[36] Ahlstrom, op. cit., pp. 370–371.

have been saved and God's people strengthened in their faith in the small church of Swede Bottom, two miles east of town. Since 1930 there has stood in the town of Houston a beautiful and commodious church building where loyal Swedish Baptists, descendants of the old pioneers, still carry on for God and His kingdom.

SCANDIA, MINNESOTA

Frontier conditions constituted an important factor in early American Christianity, and the Swedish pioneer, brave, independent, and liberty-loving, contributed a large share toward the planting of churches in the great Northwest region. After an extended tour of Minnesota, visiting all the more important Scandinavian settlements in the early summer of 1854, F. O. Nilsson wrote to his friend A. Wiberg, July 20, 1854:

> No part of the entire Mississippi valley is as suitable for Swedes as Minnesota. This is especially true of the Minnesota valley, the land on both sides of the Minnesota river, which is the most beautiful country I have ever seen. There are no large prairies, but plenty of level ground in smaller portions, an abundance of useful woods, wonderful lakes rich in fish, and a large supply of springs and streams.[37]

There was a tremendous appeal in that report. No wonder that Nilsson's spiritual children in Burlington, Iowa,—here the exiled preacher had led several of his countrymen to Christ and organized them into a church in the spring of 1854—became uneasy. The land hunger had gripped their hearts. They decided to migrate. Minnesota, and especially Carver County about twenty-five miles west of Minneapolis, became their destination.

"Happy Pioneer Days"

One of their number, Andrew Peterson, was a man of a rare order. For over forty years he kept a very careful diary,[38] and from this we gather that the small company of Swedes on May 4, 1855, boarded a steamer at Burlington. Five days later they reached St. Paul. Here a few of them stayed, while others proceeded up the Minnesota river to Carver, and thence through the woods about ten miles to the shores of beautiful Clearwater lake.[39] Here they founded a Scandia in the New World. "He who blazed the white man's trail into this enchanted garden spot of primeval beauty was a Swedish immigrant, Andrew Bergquist." This Viking adventurer had come in 1852, a year after the land west of the Mississippi had been opened to settlement. Bergquist united with the Scandia church in 1856, and in 1871 he became a charter member of the First Swedish Baptist church of Minneapolis.[40]

---

[37] Westin, op. cit. 3:2, p. 208.

[38] This diary, having been translated into English, is kept at the Bethel Seminary, St. Paul, Minn. It covers the years 1855 to 1898.

[39] *Nya Wecko-Posten,* October 3, 1905, p. 5.

Then began the happy pioneer days ("Den lyckliga nybyggaretiden").[41] Strange it is that the pioneers considered the early days a period of great happiness. For, indeed, their lot was one of hardship, privation, and sacrifice. It was no easy task to break ground in the wilderness and subdue savage Indians. But their great ambition was the possession of land, a place they could call their own. At that time, by availing themselves of their pre-emption right, they were able to purchase land for as low as $1.25 an acre. Here F. O. Nilsson, too, who had followed his flock from Burlington, secured a home of his own, 160 acres of fruitful Minnesota land. In his diary for March 20, 1857, he writes: "Thanks be to God who now in my 48th year has permitted me to become the possessor of an earthly home of my own."[42]

Organized in a Log Cabin

Like Abraham of old the little group of Swedes erected an altar unto the Lord. They realized their need of God and of one another. After a few weeks their spiritual leader called them together for the purpose of organizing a church. The place, it is believed, was the rude log cabin of Andrew Peterson, and the date was August 1, 1855. The following nine persons constituted the new church, the second in order in Minnesota, and today the oldest one with a continuous history: Alexander Johnson, Sara Johnson, Jonas Peter Johnson, Greta Johnson, Anders Peterson, John Anderson, Maria Anderson, Fredrik Olaus Nilsson and Sofia Ulrika Nilsson. F. O. Nilsson was chosen leader of the group, John Anderson, clerk, and Alexander Johnson, deacon.[43]

The first baptismal service took place on February 17, 1856. A baptistry was hewn out, as so often later, in Lake Clearwater, where the ice lay three feet thick or more. The faith of the pioneer was of the compelling kind, overcoming apparently insurmountable difficulties. Obedience to God was placed first.[44] By the end of 1856 the membership had risen to 32. In August of the following year sixteen were immersed on two successive Sundays.[45] To begin with, the services were held in the primitive homes of the members. But those aggressive Baptists had faith in God and the future. They soon set about to erect a meeting-house. On December 31, 1856, Nilsson notes in his diary: "Today the church had a business meeting at Bergquists when it was decided to build a church, 25 feet long and 20 feet wide."[46] On April 13th, the following spring, they agreed to go to work and begin to put up the walls the following Thursday. In less than three months the work on the building had proceeded far enough to enable them to hold services in it, and it was a day of great joy for the preacher and his flock when he could pen these significant words in his journal for Sunday, July 12, 1857: "This morning I preached for the first time in our new meeting house, from 1 John 4:10-11."[47] There the small church still stands on the hill, close to beautiful Clearwater lake, well preserved after all these years, and there the descendants of the pioneers, to the third and fourth generation, still worship the God of their fathers.

---

[40] C. G. Tideman, *Diamond Jubilee History, Scandia Baptist Church, 1930,* p. 19. See also *History of First Swedish Baptist Church, Minneapolis, 1871–1921,* p. 15.

[41] *Nya Wecko-Posten,* April 8, 1913, p. 5.

[42] Nilsson's Diary.

[43] *Nya Wecko-Posten.* Historical sketch. Golden Jubilee of the Scandia church, Oct. 3, 1905.

It has pleased God to visit the churches in America with frequent revivals, especially on the frontier. The Scandia church is no exception to this rule. During the first seven years a kind of perennial revival prevailed. Many believed, were baptized, and added to the church. By 1862 the membership had increased to 62, the largest number in the history of the church. In the restless years that followed the Civil War, with economic and religious depression, the group of believers in Scandia was greatly reduced. Only 15 members remained by the year 1875. But that year through a new revival, 23 new members were added to the church.[48]

A Live Church

Revivals in the early days were not of the flashy, high pressure evangelism type. A deep conviction of sin and a thorough work of grace characterized the conversions. There were several creative factors which contributed much to the success of this church. Chief among these was a wide-awake spiritual interest in children. A very beautiful custom, following the example of the Master himself, was the one of publicly blessing the little ones and dedicating them unto the Lord. Here is a sample from F. O. Nilsson's diary for June 15, 1857:

---

[44] *Scandia History,* op. cit. p. 24.

[45] *Record Book of the Scandia Church* (Protokollbok) 1855–1934, p. 2.

[46] Nilsson's Diary.

[47] Nilsson's Diary.

[48] *Record Book of the Scandia church,* pp. 58–59. *Scandia History* op. cit. p. 27.

> We had prayer meeting at Lundsten's, especially due to the fact that the grasshoppers threatened completely to destroy the crops. May the Lord have mercy on us and save us from the punishment that our sins deserve. At the same time Lundsten's newborn son Frans Gustaf, was dedicated unto God with prayer.[49]

This boy, who up to his recent death at a ripe old age was the grand old man of the Scandia church, grew up to be a consecrated and gifted leader. In 1883 he succeeded his father as Sunday school superintendent, in which capacity he served for a period of fifty years, being replaced by one of his sons a few years ago. Even before the Sunday school was organized in 1858 the thoughtful pastor would meet with the children of the settlement at regular intervals to examine them in the Bible.[50]

Deep Conviction of Sin

A second factor of utmost importance in all religious success was personal soul-winning. The Scandia pioneers talked religion to their neighbors as they met them in every-day life. In the home and in the field, morning, noon, and night, they brought the all-important question of conversion to the attention of their fellow-men. It is related that John Anderson, the church clerk, who later became a beloved and well known pioneer preacher of Minnesota, made a friendly call at the Lundstens shortly after their little home had been completed. Before he left he asked if he might read from the Bible, to which they consented. But when he knelt in prayer they were greatly surprised. It was all so strange. However, the seed planted bore fruit in a genuine conversion experience, baptism, and church fellowship.[51]

Moreover, since religious convictions were deep and intense, it is not surprising to find a rigid discipline exercised in the church. Members must refrain from worldly speech and reading on Sunday. No place for the Sunday paper with its colored supplement, or Sunday amusements here. No member was to bring a case against another before a court of law until it had been acted upon by the church.[52] Doctrinal disputes, too, could become very animated. The old-timers discussed with much vigor the relationship of law and grace, the mystery of election and the question of whether God had predestined some people to damnation. Even the preacher was taken to task on the ground that he preached an extreme view of election and predestination, that he was too lenient in receiving new members into the church, and that he attempted to introduce ritualism, especially at the Lord's Supper, when two deacons were seated on either side of the pastor. To settle the dispute they appointed a day of fasting and prayer, which resulted in confession and forgiveness.[53]

---

[49] Nilsson's Diary.

[50] There are several references to this fact in Nilsson's Diary in the years 1856–1858.

[51] *Nya Wecko-Posten,* April 8, 1913, p. 5.

Denominational Loyalty

The Swedish Baptist Conference of Minnesota, it is believed, was organized in Scandia, September 15–20, 1858. Apparently this cannot be proved. Nevertheless it is a fact that on Monday and Tuesday, September 20–21, 1858, there were meetings held of a theological and inspirational nature which might have given rise to the organization of a conference some years later.[54] The Scandia pastor was a loyal and thorough Baptist, and he did not fail to train his people in Baptist principles, a training that has born a rich fruitage throughout the years. World-wide missions had a large place in the interest of these pioneers. A missionary society was organized in August 1860. Missionary prayer meetings and contributions for missions were frequent.[55] It is a remarkable fact that as a rule the Scandia church has given considerably more to missions and benevolence than to local expense. Long live this missionary church!

[52] *Record Book,* op. cit., pp. 8–9; *Scandia History,* op. cit. pp. 38–39.

[53] Nilsson's Diary.

[54] The diary of F. O. Nilsson is clear on this point. There was no organization of a conference at this time. Andrew Norelius, pastor of the Wastado church, was present, together with some friends from the neighboring settlement at Carver. Otherwise these meetings were purely of a local nature.

[55] See *Record Book,* op. cit. p. 9 f.

CHAPTER FIVE

A FRONTIER PEOPLE

THE FRONTIER is that part of a country which fronts or faces another country, or the extreme part of a country, the advance region of settlement and civilization. It is evident that a frontier within a country is never stationary. This is especially true of our own land. The westward movement is one of the great factors in American history. In the early colonial days the frontier was but a few miles removed from the coast. At the beginning of the War of Revolution it had extended to the Alleghenies, and at the beginning of the nineteenth century the population began pouring in steady and ever increasing streams over the mountains into the new western territories. "All America," said a European observer in 1817, "seems to be breaking up and moving westward."[1]

A restless, independent spirit, and an intense land hunger were two outstanding traits in the character of the pioneer. The prospect of possessing a home of their own held a tremendous appeal for our fathers. The venture, the newness, the opposing elements, the distance, the mystery, the call of the wild, all beckoned and allured the people on the frontier. Moreover, "the frontier supplied that challenge to the heroic without which Christianity seems never to have been able to perform its best work." Dr. Sweet, a prominent American church historian, asserts that

> The pure democracy of Baptist church government would also tend to attract them to the freer life and the greater democracy of the frontier. Their preachers came from the people, and were self-supporting, and were themselves, indeed, farmers on the lookout for better land. Thus the Baptists were particularly well suited, in their ideas of government, in their economic status, and in their form of church government, to become the ideal western immigrants.[2]

What is true of Baptists in general applies equally well to the Swedish Baptists, for they too, with a few exceptions in the case of those who settled in the older centers in the East, were very largely a frontier people.

---

[1] Quoted by Sweet, *The Story of Religions in America*. New York, 1930, p. 302.

[2] Ibid., pp. 6, 312. See also Vedder, H. C., *A Short History of Baptists*, Philadelphia, 1907, pp. 321–322.

PHYSICAL DIFFICULTIES

It required courage and much sacrifice, indeed, to prepare a home in the primeval forest or on the vast prairie, to conquer a wilderness and to make this wilderness a nation's bread basket and a world's granary. Undoubtedly the early settlers were appalled at the magnitude and difficulty of their task. "With small, struggling settlements dotting the landscape at great distances, with the population in a state of flux, and with poverty dogging every step, a faith able to remove mountains was needed to surmont the obstacles and discouragements that encompassed them."[3] But the frontier spirit was preeminently a spirit of faith and sacrifice. The privations and sufferings of our fathers seem like so much fiction to the easy-going and pleasure-loving generation of the twentieth century.

Poverty on the frontier was real indeed. One of the old-timers, Frank Peterson, gives us the following realistic picture of the early days:

> The people who came here were, almost without exception, poor. Indeed, it was their straitened economic conditions that led them to emigrate. They had heard such flattering reports from America, the land of plenty, that there was a saying among them that roasted pigs ran about the streets, in the cities of America, carrying a fork and a carving knife and labeled, "Help yourselves." When the immigrant arrived, however, he soon discovered that such portable feasts were not in evidence. On the other hand, it required the wages of several days' work to purchase even a small pig. Wages were fifty to seventy-five cents a day, and the man who could earn one dollar per day was an outstanding individual. In the country, living was based on the most frugal scale. The table menu was of the simplest kind and nearly always the same.
>
> The clothing was nearly all home spun and home made. The mothers had a strenuous time. Besides caring for the home, preparing meals, helping in the fields, they sat up long in the night after the family had gone to bed, mending clothing or carding wool, spinning yarn or weaving cloth. Then too, the mother was the family tailor. The cloth she wove in the weary hours of the night must be made into clothes for the children. Many a time my heart ached to see my mother toil like a galley slave to keep things going.[4]

Distances were great between the small settlements, and of roads there were none except Indian trails. F. O. Nilsson writes to Wiberg from Burlington, Iowa, August 21, 1854:

---

[3] Stephenson, op. cit., p. 148.

[4] *Jubileumsboken,* op. cit. pp. 43–44.

> Apparently I shall not be very useful in Minnesota, for a strong and healthy body is needed there to endure the strain of much traveling by foot between the various preaching places. The Swedes are there as elsewhere in the country very widely dispersed. And roads and means of communication are as yet in the most primitive and imperfect condition.[5]

The human back was often the only means of conveyance. Both flour sacks and stoves, to say nothing of other household necessities, were carried frequently as far as thirty miles or more.[6] Needless to say one could not afford to waste anything in those days.

The home of the pioneer was a dugout or sod house on the prairie, or a rude log cabin in the forest. In such a home the living room, dining room, bed room and kitchen were all one. But in all its simplicity it was a home they could call their own. They were possessors of land. They were free and independent. What more could they wish for? Independent they were, to be sure, and yet there were tender feelings of mutual dependence and need which cemented the people on the frontier into one large family. According to one of the pioneers: "We were like one family, the whole settlement, and what one family had they all had. We were all of one accord and had such a good time in all our poverty. I shall never forget those days."[7]

Without the comfort and strength supplied by this spirit of neighborliness and love the early settlers hardly could have survived. For they were running a neck-and-neck race with death by starvation or freezing. Perils from wild beasts, perils from savage Indians, and perils from implacable forces of nature! A few examples from the early days in Minnesota will indicate the hardships on the frontier.

One of those destructive forces was the prairie blizzard. Frank Peterson gives a realistic account of such a blizzard that struck the area of Worthington in Southwestern Minnesota January 7, 1873. About seventy-five people, including some Swedish Baptists, perished in that never-to-be-forgotten storm.[8] Another calamity, more far-reaching than any blizzard and economically more devastating, was the plague of grasshoppers that afflicted the west central states for five consecutive years in the early seventies. Crops were completely devoured. Not even a blade of green grass remained. The governor of Minnesota became concerned about the situation, and issued a proclamation setting aside April 26, 1877, as a day of prayer and fasting. Some scoffed, but many observed the day. It pleased God to answer those prayers, and the scourge disappeared.[9] A similar experience of the destructive work of the grasshoppers, but also of divine help in answer to the prayers of a little group of believers, comes to us from the state of Nebraska. It was in the month of June, 1875. The grasshoppers had devoured the crops for several years. A prayer meeting was called. Hardly had prayer ceased when someone outside cried, "They fly, they fly." And fly they did. With a roaring like a mighty sea the innumerable winged creatures lifted and disappeared in the west.[10]

---

[5] Westin, op. cit. 3:2, p. 222. Norelius, *History,* op. cit. p. 156.

[6] Ryden, P., *Svenska Baptisternas i Minnesota Historia, 1850–1918.* Minneapolis, pp. 17, 21.

[7] Ibid., p. 24. See also *Minnen Från Banbrytaretiden* by P. Ryden at Old Settlers Reunion Meeting, Isanti North, May 14–16, 1915.

[8] Frank Peterson, *Early Days on Minnesota Prairie,* 1914, pp. 5–6. See also *Svenska Standaret,* Chicago, Jan. 17, 1914.

DENOMINATIONAL CONTROVERSIES

As early as in the apostolic church we read about "strife and divisions." It seems that they are bound to come in a world of imperfection and variations in beliefs and temperaments. In the Middle Ages, and until quite recently even in Protestant countries with a state church system, the heretic, one who dared to differ from the established order, suffered persecution in the form of fines, imprisonments, banishment and death. Even our own country, "the land of the free," did not escape this spirit of intolerance. In colonial Massachusetts and Virginia, Baptists and other nonconformists suffered much affliction for the sake of their faith. Religious persecutions and controversies constitute a dark chapter in the story of Christianity. But the cloud has a silver lining. For both the faith and life of the believer have been purified and strengthened in the fiery furnace of suffering. "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."

That Swedish Baptists on the American frontier in the propagation of their faith should meet opposition from other groups is not a strange thing. *In the first place,* "the pioneer is always an independent individualist, determined to go his own way in religion,"[11] and the very nature of the frontier furnished fruitful soil for religious controversies and divisions. *Secondly,* the mass of Swedish immigrants were practically all nominal Lutherans, having been members of the Lutheran state church of Sweden. It was natural, therefore, when Swedish Lutherans began to organize churches in America—in this they preceded the Swedish Baptists by four years—that they should consider all Swedes their parish, and their own church as the authorized Swedish church of America ("Den Svenska kyrkan i America"). Other denominations were only "sects."[12] They were all looked upon as intruders and disturbers of the peace and the established order. *Thirdly,* ever since the sad Münster uprising of the fanatical Anabaptists in the sixteenth century, there has been a very bad taste connected with the word "Baptist." Historians until quite recently, in speaking about Baptists, for some reason or other, have been either unable or unwilling to distinguish between the large body of true and Biblical Anabaptists and the small group of fanatical Münsterites.[13] Baptists were regarded as the worst kind of heretics. They undermined the established order of salvation, and denied the blessed sacrament of baptism to little infants. *Fourthly,* the Baptists, taking the Bible as their only authority in faith and practice, with their stress on a regenerate church membership and believers' immersion, were radically different from the Pedobaptists who sprinkled infants. Wherever there were unsaved souls to win—and who could deny but that the majority of the Swedes, though nominal Lutherans, were still unsaved and needed Christ—there the Baptists considered it their divine call to proclaim the gospel. *Fifthly,* the Swedish Baptists on the American frontier had very recently escaped, as it were, from the fiery furnace of religious persecution in the mother country. Impressed indelibly upon their minds was the fact that the state church was the instigator of all their afflictions. It is not strange, therefore, if they were somewhat suspicious of a church with the same name and denominational connection here in the New World.

---

[9] Peterson, op. cit. pp. 13–14.

[10] *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* Chicago, 1878, pp. 70–72. This is a Swedish Baptist monthly with a considerable amount of good source material. Chicago 1877–1884. See also *History of the Platte Valley Baptist Conference 1872–1947,* by Carl J. Seaquist, p. 10.

[11] Sweet, op. cit. p. 5.

With this background in mind, and considering the human imperfections and frailties present in every religious group, it should be possible to make a reasonably correct evaluation of denominational controversies among the Swedes on the frontier. Hardly had Gustaf Palmquist been immersed before the struggle started. A Lutheran minister in Chisago Lake, Minnesota, was deeply stirred when he heard that Palmquist had gone clear over to the Baptists. "Never before," he complains, "has the devil become so white. For all the spiritually enlightened brethren affirm that no one ever preached the pure and unadulterated gospel better than Palmquist did. I am afraid that many will follow his example and without any further study of the Scriptures accept the Baptist way."[14]

---

[12] Swedish Lutheran writers even of today frequently use the word "sect" to designate other communions. They should remember that they too are a sect, cut off from the Roman Catholic church.

[13] The Münsterites had nothing in common with the real Anabaptists save immersion. By that kind of argument even the Mormons could be called Baptists, for they practice immersion.

Eric Norelius, one of the founders of Swedish Lutheranism in America, gives Palmquist credit for being a lovable character, and a good preacher with a winsome personality. He knew how to attract the young people, and by reason of this he would be much more dangerous as a heretic. Serious contention about baptism became the order of the day. In the words of Norelius:

> With sorrow I experienced that many of my old friends and ardent "Luther-läsare" (readers) permitted themselves to be ensnared by the rationalistic teachings of the Baptists, gradually sliding down until many of them lost Christianity completely and landed in crass infidelity.
>
> The Baptist controversy, continues the same Lutheran author, increased in strength a few years, until it finally had spent its energy and lost its influence upon the mass of our Swedish people, especially because of a keener appreciation of the Lutheran confession as well as of the inherent weakness of the Baptist way.[15]

The facts, however, contradict the above statement both in regard to the controversy and the loss of Baptist influence. The controversies continued, and apparently both Lutherans and Baptists seemed to thrive under it, for at least fifty years longer, and in a more moderate way even down to our own days. The great debates on baptism at the turn of the century, the Baptists being challenged by the Lutherans, indicate that the spirit of intolerance was as strong as ever. A leading Lutheran weekly reflects the same attitude: "If we were to choose between two evils, then the Methodists are greatly to be preferred to the Baptists, both because they adhere to infant baptism and also because they seem to promote order and outward solidarity of the church."[16] In the same organ a correspondent from the west coast writes, "Now we have received another help (?). A Baptist preacher, O. Okerson from Minnesota, has settled here and is preaching most diligently." The editor, in a footnote, makes the following comment, "This is a common occurrence. Wherever we Lutherans have started a mission, as a rule not before, there we get such helpers. But, of course, that is not counted as party-spirit!"[17]

As to the waning of the Baptist influence upon the Swedish people, that is another story, a story both romantic and reassuring for Christian faith, which will be related in succeeding chapters of this book. Contrary to the expectation of the adversaries, the opposition encountered caused the little group of despised Swedish Baptists to go forth with greater determination than ever to win lost sinners for Christ. They grew strong in both faith and life and constantly increased in numbers. In rare instances, however, the Baptists had to yield the field to the stronger party. "At Chisago Lake the Swedish Baptists found their Lutheran neighbors so unpleasant that they emigrated to Cambridge (Isanti), where they had organized a congregation in 1860."[18] The result was that the Baptists multiplied here so fast that Isanti soon became the most outstanding Swedish Baptist county in America.

---

[14] Norelius, *Historia,* p. 546.

[15] Ibid., pp. 157–160.

[16] *Augustana och Missionären,* March 10, 1880.

[17] Ibid., March 16, 1881.

A typical incident occurred in 1854 in the New Sweden settlement, some forty miles west of Burlington, Iowa. According to Professor Stephenson, what took place was "so remarkable that if it were not supported by documentary evidence, it would be more appropriate in the pages of fiction than of history."[19] M. F. Hokanson had come to the settlement in the summer of 1847, and had become the recognized preacher among the Swedes both here and in Burlington, the very first Augustana Lutheran minister in Western America. Most of the Swedes joined the Lutheran church. But religious peace was not to last, for the Methodists made their '"assaults" early, and soon the Baptist "storm" broke loose. Palmquist and Nilsson arrived and "presented baptism in such a fanatical way that no one could clear himself. Hokanson was much disturbed." Some of his best friends, who lived the life of faith, began to waver and soon after allowed themselves to be baptized. In a discussion with Nilsson on baptism Hokanson became uneasy. He found it difficult to offer proofs for pedobaptism. "Suddenly he was overwhelmed with terror and confusion and—fell." He could not resist the truth any longer in regard to baptism, but had to admit that the Baptists were right.

There was to be a New Testament baptism in Skunk River,[20] and the Lutheran pastor Hokanson and his wife were among those who were to be immersed. Hasselquist[21] had come from Galesburg to save the situation for Lutheranism. "Approaching the Hokanson home, he met him and his wife, and a few others, carrying a basket with some clothes, traveling down toward the river. Hasselquist greeted them in a friendly way and asked, 'Where are you going?' 'To receive the right baptism,' was the reply. 'Well, go then, in the name of the Lord!' said Hasselquist." However, after an hour or two Hokanson was persuaded that the sprinkling he had received in infancy was all-sufficient, and he appeared a little later at the place of immersion to announce his decision. Nilsson told him here that he should obey the Word of God rather than men. The result was that Hokanson once more changed his mind, sent for his clothes and was immersed.

---

[18] Anders, J. O., *The Origin and History of Swedish Religious Organizations in Minnesota 1853–1885,* Rock Island, 1932, p. 16.

[19] Stephenson, op. cit. p. 208.

[20] The whole New Sweden settlement often went by the name of Skunk River.

[21] Hasselquist was undoubtedly the most important founder of Swedish Lutheranism in America.

Only twenty-four hours did the fickle-minded preacher remain in the Baptist fold. He bemoans that sad day:

> My heart is grieved. Satan has sifted me, but the Lord Jesus has prayed for me. Instead of seeking light and comfort in God's word I seized upon Wiberg's book and was deceived. Remorse, anguish, despair and terror overwhelmed me so that I was on the point of going away from both wife and property. Just one day I was united with them (the Baptists). I became so disgusted with my new brethren that I hardly would look at them. I regret, bemoan and deplore the unlucky day when I renounced the baptism I received in my childhood. I also confess that I was really not convinced, but terrified and stirred up in my mind, and in that condition I went ahead as a malefactor to the place of execution.[22]

The Baptist version of the Lutheran-Baptist controversy on the American frontier appears in numerous letters written by Palmquist, Wiberg and Nilsson. "A week ago last Sunday," writes Palmquist, "a public notice was read both in Rock Island and Moline, containing a threat to all Swedish Lutherans that if they do not cease to listen to strange and sectarian preachers (referring to me, for no others are located here), they shall be debarred from Holy Communion." About a year later by the same writer:

> Esbjörn, Hasselquist, Wallentin and Hokanson arranged a conference in Moline and Rock Island, the fundamental object of which was, both publicly and privately, to counteract me, and to present the Baptist way as the most dangerous heresy. In Rock Island it had no effect because the people already knew me. But in Moline many were frightened away from my services. Of Hasselquist I had expected better. With false accusations he tried his utmost to besmear the Baptists in general and me in particular. Bitterness against the Baptists is greatly increasing, and hardly any Lutherans attend my meetings now.[23]

---

[22] Norelius, *Historia,* pp. 93–97. Westin, op. cit. 3:2, pp. 127, 149, 157.

[23] Westin, op. cit. 3:1, pp. 99, 184; 3:2, p. 78. See also *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* 1878, pp. 72–73; 1884, pp. 24, 168.

It is rather significant, in considering religious controversies among the pioneers, that an objective historian like George M. Stephenson, himself a Lutheran, gives the Baptists the following commendation:

> The Baptist church was fortunate in having such men of outstanding ability as Gustaf Palmquist and Anders Wiberg. With the exception of F. O. Nilsson and Andrew Norelius, the early Baptist preachers did not arouse such bitter enmity from the Lutherans as did the missionaries of the other sects. The Christian excellence of character of Wiberg and Palmquist impressed almost every one who came in contact with them, and they were more moderate in their remarks about Lutheranism. Moreover, they were endowed with ability of high order, and in education and training were on a par with the Swedish Lutheran leaders.[24]

Controversies with other groups, besides the Lutherans, were more sporadic and local in nature. Nevertheless, they became occasionally even more bitter and destructive as far as the Baptist membership is concerned. This is true in particular of the early Swedish Methodists and the Adventists. Palmquist and Nilsson felt the Methodist opposition very keenly. "They (the Methodists) spread impudent lies and deception, yet the people believe them." Jonas Hedstrom, the Methodist pioneer preacher, preceded Palmquist to Iowa. Here he preached about "the evil baptism of the Baptists as something exceedingly heretical." He charged the people not to have anything to do with the Baptists, "and, besides," adds Palmquist, "he is inventing the most flagrant lies about me to besmear my character." The Methodist teaching of sinless perfectionism was considered one of the most subtle of heresies, and it made a tremendous appeal to many of the frontier people. Once captivated by this evil nothing could be done for them. They became self-righteous pharisees.[25] Not only the doctrines they proclaimed but also the methods employed were highly captivating. "Hedstrom stormed and exhorted and sought to appeal to the emotions after the fashion of the frontier revivalist."[26] In fact, "the Methodists were so zealous in attacking the Baptists that Palmquist was moved to write to O. G. Hedstrom about his brother's (Jonas Hedstrom) unchristian conduct. F. O. Nilsson, Andrew Norelius, and others fared no better, according to their own testimony."[27]

As a rule neither the Lutherans nor the Methodists won any proselytes from the Baptist ranks. Ordinarily it turned out the other way.

---

[24] Stephenson, op. cit. p. 207.

[25] Westin, op. cit. 3:1, pp. 160, 164, 166.

[26] Norelius, *Historia,* p. 24–26; 90–92, as quoted by Stephenson.

[27] Stephenson, op. cit., p. 208.

The Seventh Day Adventists, however, had better success. In a few places their influence became devastating like a prairie fire. The reason for this is not far to seek. Their sensational preaching on the prophecies, making a detailed map of the future and setting definite dates for the second coming of the Lord and the end of the world, could not fail but make an impression. For the human mind has always been curious to pry into the mysteries of the future and the great realms beyond this earthly scene. Particularly has this been the case in periods of unrest and suffering.

The Baptists appeared to be more fruitful soil than other communions for the Adventist proselyting. Baptism by immersion, which is also practised by the Adventists, may serve as a partial explanation. Upon the Village Creek church in Iowa the storm of Adventist controversy descended in greater fury than any other place. Here they made their advent around 1870, and carried on their campaign with considerable energy. A. G. Swedberg, who had been the beloved pastor of the church for more than fourteen years, was one of the first to embrace the new doctrine. This surrender was quite unexpected, and it shook the church to its very center. The discussions became heated and bitter, and often unreasonable. Many of the members were carried away with the Adventist delusion. Swedberg was forced to resign. But his successor, too, a preacher by the name of Hansen, soon turned into the Adventist camp. Things looked desperate for the church, and it was on the verge of dissolution.

At this juncture, however, in the year 1872, O. Lindh, pastor of the Rock Island church, arrived on the scene to assist the bewildered Baptists with good advice and sound doctrine. The church called S. J. Sjogren as pastor. Under his ministry an extensive revival took place, which, for a while, drew the attention away from the Adventist controversy. The end was not in sight, however, for the harmonious relation of pastor and church was broken once more. When Sjogren resigned he also went to the Adventists. Here now were three preachers in succession lost to the church and won by the chiliastic group.[28]

For some two decades or more, it seems that the Seventh Day Adventists caused considerable trouble among Swedish Baptists in different areas. Fundamental teachings of the Bible were at stake. For there was not only an unbalanced presentation of things to come, but also a legalistic interpretation of the way of salvation. Keeping the seventh day as sabbath was the only assurance of obtaining eternal life.

---

[28] Frank Peterson, *Autobiography,* Chicago, 1930, p. 58. O. Lindh, Minnen, pp. 86–91. L. J. Ahlstrom, *Swedish Baptists in Iowa,* p. 79.

That the Baptist people were intimately affected appears by numerous references in denominational periodicals and conference annuals. The relative merit of law and liberty, of salvation by works or by grace, were subjects constantly pushed to the front, largely as a result of the Adventist controversy.

An illuminating case comes from Northern Michigan where the Adventists apparently flourished for a while. Some proselytes were made from the Baptists, and the churches hardly knew how to counteract the Advent influence. In the early nineties J. P. Rosquist had become pastor of the Iron Mountain Baptist church. Having himself been an Adventist he was the man for the hour. A series of lectures, dealing with the distinctive principles of Adventism, was arranged. The largest church auditorium in the city could not contain the eager crowds that came to listen. The old-timers still speak of it as a decisive battle. The gifted preacher dealt so effectively with his subject that Adventism was thoroughly repelled, not only in Iron Mountain but in the whole area, and was never again revived.[29]

STRONG CONVICTIONS

Religious dissenter as he was, the Swedish Baptist immigrant soon developed a robust and pronounced independence in faith and thinking, a characteristic which found fertile soil on the American frontier. We hear about the "unbudgeable" faith of our fathers. There is no question about their firmness, but this "unbudgeable thing" was not always faith but sheer stubborness. Each one stood adamant on his own interpretation of the Bible.[30] With convictions so intense, it was not strange that many of the pioneers believed the Baptists alone to be God's chosen people. Co-operation with others, who did not obey the Scriptures, could never be seriously considered.

The Swedish Baptists were close students of the Bible. Theirs was an unshakeable faith in the Word of God. The fundamental teachings of sin and grace, regeneration and justification, heaven and hell, were being discussed early and late. The all-important question was, "What does the Bible say about it?" The average church member had a good knowledge of the Bible. That was practically the only book to be found in the home of the pioneer. He had read it as one of the text books in the public schools of Sweden, as well as in his home and while confined in prison for his faith. Many of the old-timers could repeat chapter after chapter from memory. According to a statement by Olof Bodien, the state prisons of Sweden were the first theological seminaries of Swedish Baptists. "A preacher in those days did not know how to divide his sermon properly into first, second, and third points with subdivisions, but his sermons were full of the Word of God. Every sermon was flooded, from beginning to end, with quotations from the Bible."[31]

---

[29] *A Historical Sketch* of the Fifty Years of Existence and Work of the Swedish Immanuel Baptist Church of Iron Mountain, Michigan, 1930, p. 19.

[30] *Jubileumsboken,* op. cit. p. 45.

The pioneer was a diamond in the rough who might not have been very polished in the finer things of life. But he had a keen sense of the dreadful reality of sin with its guilt and eternal damnation. People were afraid of the wrath of God, and they trembled, like Jonathan Edwards' congregation of old, as they listened as the frontier preacher in red hot words pictured "the sinner in the hands of an angry God."

Little wonder that "the old rugged cross" became attractive. It was placed in the center of their theology where it certainly belongs. Listen to Gustaf Palmquist in his pastoral message to the church in Rock Island:

> Often our hearts and tongues have unitedly sung the praise of Him who died for us, and with great rejoicing I remember our meditations upon the fact of redemption, the good news for poor lost sinners—Jesus died in their stead, Jesus died in our stead, Jesus, our Savior. Brethren and sisters, I would like to raise my voice so as to be heard from New York even unto you, and cry out—Jesus died in your stead, Jesus has risen for your justification—is not this sufficient?[32]

From a thousand humble hearts of Swedish Baptists on the frontier could be heard, as it were, ascending to the very gates of heaven, a loud "Amen."

The Swedish Baptists were on common ground with the Lutherans in their emphasis on the substitutionary and penal aspects of the atonement. It has been questioned, however, due to the influence of an ultra-evangelicalism of the "läsare"-movement, whether there was not somewhat of an unbalanced faith in Christ as the sinner's substitute at the expense of Christ as an example for the believer.[33] This may partly explain the opposition Palmquist experienced from the Methodists. In regard to a limited, or particular atonement, which some of the American Baptists, including the Mariners' Church in New York, advocated in the extreme, even to the extent of making it a condition of church membership, both Wiberg and Palmquist believed it to be unscriptural and an obstacle in the way of proclaiming the gospel to all creatures.[34]

---

[31] Olof Bodien, *The Swedish Baptists of Minnesota,* MS., p. 6.

[32] Per Palmquist, *En Korsets Härold: Gustaf Palmquists Lif.* Stockholm, 1889, pp. 61–62.

[33] Ibid., pp. 78–79.

With such profound appreciation of the redemptive value of Calvary and the sufferings and death of our Lord, there could be little place for the easygoing, superficial, and hand-shaking type of conversion. Our fathers believed in the new birth. What the Bible said concerning the new birth was a vital question. "Are you born again?" "Are you a child of God?" These were questions that must be answered in seeking church membership. One must know exactly what passage of Scripture it was he used as a foundation for his faith in Christ. He must tell the place, the time and the circumstances under which he experienced that which he called "salvation."[35] The Lutheran teaching of regeneration in the sprinkling of infants was to the Baptists pure superstition and the worst kind of heresy.

In the doctrine of predestination and election many, though not all, of the founders were attracted to Calvinism and influenced to a large extent by Reformed theology. Wiberg, in particular, was a staunch defender of the doctrine of election.[36] In a letter of August 18, 1853, he writes to Palmquist: "I am becoming more convinced that a truly born again soul never can go lost. The very warnings concerning apostasy addressed to true believers become a divine and sure preservative against final apostasy."[37] On this point Palmquist could not go all the way with his friend, and was unable to believe that a saved soul could never be eternally lost. He admits, however, that "cases of final apostasy of true believers are very rare if they ever occur."[38] As stated in a previous chapter, F. O. Nilsson was rebuked by the Scandia church for preaching an extreme view of the doctrine of election.[39] Apparently he was of the same opinion as Wiberg in the matter. Later leaders among Swedish Baptists quite generally became exponents of a modified type of Calvinism, some with a greater emphasis on the human factor in salvation, and others stressing divine predestination and grace.

That their earthly habitation was but a primitive sod house on the western prairie or a rude log cabin in the deep forest did not in the least discourage the pioneers. For they were but pilgrims and strangers on earth, waiting for the city with many and abiding mansions and for the land of eternal day. Heaven was a living reality to the saints on the frontier. And though their frame might have bent under the burden of toil and care, there was a song of victory in the heart.[40] From the post-millennial point of view, Wiberg was a firm believer in the final victory of the kingdom of God. With the coming of Edgren and his seminary, the pre-millennial conception prevailed among Swedish Baptists.

---

[34] Westin, op. cit., 3:2, pp. 249–252.

[35] Bodien, op. cit. p. 6.

[36] Wiberg's thorough scholarship and acquaintance with English and American theological literature became a potent factor in shaping his own thinking.

[37] Westin, op. cit., 3:2, p. 43.

[38] Ibid. pp. 52–53.

[39] See Nilsson's Diary.

A LIVING RELIGION

It would be incorrect to suppose that the pioneer was entirely lost in doctrinal controversies, and that his religion was devoid of all ethics. Even though preaching on sanctification did not hold as prominent a place as in more recent times, the proclamation of the great fact of redemption through the shed blood of our Lord and the necessity of the new birth could not fail to bear fruit in changed lives. The preacher on the frontier did not know how to make finespun distinctions about right and wrong merely for his intellectual amusement or to display dialectical skill. But the grace of God had taught him to forsake ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.

A church that lives by revivals rather than by birthright membership is likely to be a live church. This was the case with the pioneer Swedish Baptists. Practically every local church that survived experienced frequent and gracious outpourings of the Spirit. At the Diamond Jubilee celebration in 1927 Frank Peterson, then in his eightieth year, gave a graphic account of the revival at Village Creek in which he as a young boy found Christ.

> My experience of the revival in the village where I was converted stands vividly before my memory. The meetings were in English and conducted by a lay preacher. His vivid description of the risk incurred by the unsaved made a lasting impression upon our minds. Soon the spirit of indifference broke like the ice in a spring freshet, and here and there anxious souls arose to ask what to do to be saved. The light of heaven broke forth and one by one stood up to testify of salvation found. The effect was electric. A more thorough-going revival I never witnessed.[41]

The revival in Moline, Illinois, during the winter of 1873 is another typical case. On a certain Friday evening only four persons had come out to the prayer meeting, and the discouraged preacher, O. Lindh, hesitated on Sunday whether to announce any more services for the coming week. Monday evening, however, to the great surprise of everyone, the church was crowded, and the Spirit of God fell upon the people. The meetings continued night after night all winter. Every evening there were scores who stood up bathed with tears asking for prayers. The whole Swedish population seemed to be touched by the Spirit of God. People who never went to church, and such as were openly hostile to the Baptists, came and were saved. "God," they said, "dwells in the Baptist church." Those who lived far away brought their lunch so they would not need to return until they were converted.[42]

---

[40] *Palmquists Lif,* p. 77.

[41] *Jubileumsboken,* op. cit. p. 47. Frank Peterson, *Autobiography,* pp. 16–18.

Even the yearly meetings of the various conferences frequently culminated in revivals. Such was the experience of the Minnesota Conference assembled at Cokato in June, 1875. In the midst of reports and debates it seems that a spirit of prayer gripped the whole company. Several unsaved turned to the Lord. A father had come to the conference with his four daughters, only one of whom was a Christian. When they returned home they were all believers. With the revival fire burning in their hearts, many of the delegates carried it back to their home churches with the result that during the following weeks there were reports in the denominational press of great harvests of souls in Grove City, Scandia, Worthington, and other places.[43]

In the religion on the frontier the family altar was placed in the center. In fact, the whole Swedish Baptist movement was preeminently a child of prayer. It was not an exception, but rather the rule, that the father would gather the whole family for Bible study and prayer both morning and evening. Occasionally it happened that the mother had to take the lead for the father was still unsaved. One of these fathers on the frontier related how he would often come home intoxicated and find his wife and children on their knees in prayer for his conversion. The prayers touched the throne of grace, and the father found salvation in Christ. A religion steeped in prayer is bound to become aggressive. It will be reaching out to "the next towns."

Personal soul-winning grew out of a warm prayer life. The pioneers talked religion to their neighbors as they met them in everyday life. In the home and in the field, morning, noon and night, they brought the all-important question of conversion to the attention of their fellowmen.

Often it happened that parents had the joy of leading their own children to Christ. In the summer of 1875 A. B. Orgren wrote from Minneapolis:

---

[42] Lindh, *Minnen,* pp. 82–86.

[43] *Evangelisten,* 1875, pp. 167–168. *Zions Wakt,* July and August 1875. Zions Wakt was published by J. A. Edgren, Chicago, 1874–1876.

> Brother Silene and I stayed at the same place. One night we were awaked by our kind hostess who was exceedingly burdened over the salvation of her three youngest children. She asked us to arise and help her to pray. We did so, and after some time on our knees, brother Silene asked her to go and wake up the children and bring them in to us. As we talked with the children, the Spirit of God convicted them of sin, and there in the silence of the night that mother rejoiced with her three children in their new found Savior.[44]

As the gate into the Kingdom was narrow, so was also the door into the church. The pioneers watched over it with painstaking care to make sure no unregenerate souls would get in. "When a convert applied for baptism, he had to run the gauntlet of the whole church that was ready to bombard him with all manner of questions, both wise and unwise. The applicant had an embarrassing time; for some questions were such as would tax the skill of an expert theologian. Anyway, these searching questions, which gave the applicant a perspiring time, convinced all that the putting on of Christ was not a light and flippant thing."[45] To the pioneer it was of greater importance to weigh the souls than to count them. They were above all things anxious to keep the church pure.

A stern discipline was considered one of the means to keep the church pure and spiritually healthy. Church records from the early days are filled with cases of discipline. And the denominational press often sounded the same note. Not only the more flagrant violations of morality but also all kinds of conduct that were considered unethical constituted valid reason for the church to interfere with the private affairs of the individual members. The use of tobacco and intoxicating liquors, worldly amusements such as the theatre and the dance, membership in secret societies, dishonesty in business deals, going to law with a believer, believers' marriage to unbelievers—this is but a partial list of the sins that required discipline. Occasionally a business meeting became more like a court of justice than a Christian effort to regain the erring one. There seemed to be a lack of correct conception of the purpose of discipline. "This seemingly harsh and blunt way of going at things was not done in a spirit of meanness, but on the other hand, was regarded as a virtue, in defense of truth and righteousness. They maintained that the outsider must know that irregularities were not tolerated within the church. They believed that it was better for one sheep to be cut off from the fold than that the whole flock should be contaminated."[46]

---

[44] *Zions Wakt,* July, 1875.

[45] Frank Peterson in *Jubileumsboken,* p. 45.

Under a stern exterior, however, there beat in the pioneer a warm heart of love and sacrifice. The early preacher, as well as the common people, knew the meaning of hardship, and were willing to sacrifice, if need be, even their lives in order to tell the story of Jesus to hungry hearts on the frontier. Listen to one of these heroes of faith, who made a mission tour through the state of Iowa in the winter of 1869. He described his lodging in the following terms:

> It was cold as in a dog house. There was no heater in the room. Such luxuries they could not afford. The window panes were broken, and the wind had free access into every corner. I buttoned up my overcoat and pulled down the cap tightly around my head. It was zero weather on the outside, and not much warmer in the room. I lay like a dog under the bed for two nights, and in the bed above me were two who were sick with typhus.[47]

In their extreme poverty the people did not have much to offer the itinerant minister. Even to give him food and shelter meant sacrifice, but in nearly every case he was welcome to his share of whatever comforts the pioneer family possessed. In fact, hospitality was one of the outstanding virtues among the people on the frontier. The first question they asked of the stranger at their door was, "Are you hungry? Do you want something to eat?" Both food and shelter, though possessed in such limited degree, were gladly shared with others. In return they often had the privilege of entertaining angels unawares. It was a living religion. It was Christianity in action. It was the social gospel at its best, translated into a daily walk with the Master, the great Head of the Church.

[46] Ibid., p. 46.

[47] Lindh, *Minnen,* pp. 69–71.

CHAPTER SIX

THE STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE

CHURCHES ORGANIZED BEFORE 1865

Beginnings of Swedish Baptist work had been made in three states—Illinois, Iowa, and Minnesota. It was not only a day of small beginning, but the progress was exceedingly slow. In 1864, after twelve years of much labor and sacrifice, the visible result amounted to eleven small churches with about three hundred and sixty members. Four or five more churches had been started, but after a few years were forced out of existence. Compared to the rapid growth of the early Baptists in Sweden, who increased from fifty to nearly five thousand members in the period 1852 to 1861, the planting of Swedish Baptist churches on the American frontier seemed a rather discouraging project. However, in the light of environmental factors and creative forces in the different fields it is possible to discover many reasons for this unequal growth and development.

In the fifties and sixties Swedish immigration was comparatively new and limited in number. The settlers were few and scattered over a large area, and had to travel long distances, mostly on foot, in order to reach the places of religious worship. A determined opposition also, as seen above, in practically every community, and a superstitious fear of Baptists as dangerous heretics, undoubtedly retarded the progress in the early years. The churches were composed mostly of recent and inexperienced converts. And the preachers, being altogether too few, were with the exception of Wiberg and Palmquist, untrained and often below the average in leadership and ability. Furthermore, they were mostly self-supporting, toiling hard at manual labor during the week days, and thus greatly limited in time and opportunity for an effective gospel propagation. Had Wiberg and Palmquist remained in America, gifted as they were in a marked degree as authors, preachers, and leaders, it is safe to assume a much greater missionary expansion among early Swedish Baptists. One must not forget, however, that in spite of the difficulty of the soil a seed was planted by the pioneers, which, under the influence of God's sunshine and rain, was destined to ripen into a great harvest.

It was a time of struggle and uncertainty. Five of the little churches, for one reason or another, found it impossible to continue beyond this period. Of the sixteen churches founded before 1865 only five exist today. The story of the Rock Island, Village Creek, Houston, and Scandia churches has been related at some length in chapter three. It now remains briefly to describe the other twelve organizations.

CHURCHES IN ILLINOIS

Chicago—The first Swedish Baptist to preach the gospel in Chicago was L. L. Frisk. He had received a New Testament baptism at Strong Place Church, Brooklyn, New York, the first week in November, 1853, and arrived in Chicago in the middle of the same month.[1] Wiberg, Palmquist, and Nilsson all believed Chicago to be a strategic center for Swedish Baptist work. But they also seemed to fear that Frisk would not measure up to the great demands and opportunities of the field, for he was too easy-going, shiftless, and afraid of sacrifices and hard work.[2]

However, the seed that was planted by Frisk as well as by Palmquist and Nilsson, who both held meetings in Chicago in 1854, lived and bore fruit. The exact date for the organization of the church is difficult to determine.[3] The natural inference one would draw from a letter by Palmquist to Wiberg of March 11, 1854, after a week of services in Chicago, is that by that time no Swedish Baptist church had been founded.[4] And the last week of April the same year, after a visit to the city, F. O. Nilsson writes, "There are now eight Swedish Baptists in Chicago, including Frisk and his wife." Frisk's wife had been immersed by Palmquist the first week in March. There were four or five more believers who seriously considered following Christ in baptism. But Nilsson had nothing to say about a church organization. In his comprehensive work "Chicago and the Baptists," Dr. Perry J. Stackhouse gives November 13, 1854, as the date of organization, which is probably correct.[5]

In June of 1856 the first conference of Swedish Baptists met at Rock Island. The minutes indicate that Palmquist, who served as moderator of the conference, represented Chicago and that the church there had a membership of twenty.[6] The following year, when the conference convened at Village Creek, Chicago reported 24 members, but in 1859 the membership had decreased to twenty.[7] In 1857 F. O. Nilsson spent the last two weeks of September in Chicago, preaching the gospel, and also five Sundays the following summer. At that time he had received a call to become pastor of the church at an annual salary of two hundred dollars. However, he wrote in his diary that he felt unequal to the task. "The church is in a poor condition, the members are unspiritual and entertain erroneous views on the fundamental doctrines." In February of 1860 Nilsson was back in Chicago, and observed, "the condition among the Swedish Baptists is sad." Frisk had returned, after Palmquist had left for Sweden, and caused trouble so that several for his sake had left the church.[8] This may account for the decrease in membership reported to the conference of 1859. It is believed that the small church in the big city weathered the storm until 1864 when it disbanded.[9]

---

[1] Westin, op. cit., 3:2, pp. 82, 99.

[2] Ibid., pp. 99–100, 148, 175.

[3] Historians have given the fall of 1853 as the time of organization. The sources, however, do not support these assumptions.

[4] Westin, op. cit., 3:2, pp. 147–149

[5] Ibid., pp. 150, 175.

Galesburg and Altona—To the fourth annual meeting of the conference, held at Rock Island in June 1859, L. L. Frisk reported that during the year—evidently reckoning the conference year from June to June—a church of 26 members had been organized at Galesburg.[10] This could mean that the church was founded either during the last half of 1858 or during the first half of 1859. According to O. Lindh there were some men of "talent and education" in the Galesburg church, who even published a religious periodical for a couple of years, 1859–1861, that being the first venture of its kind by Swedish Baptists.[11] However, the Galesburg church was short-lived. For the whole congregation, with the exception of one member, moved to Altona where it continued, though with a small membership, for a number of years. In Galesburg a second church was constituted by O. Lindh and N. J. Rundquist in 1869. Due to internal dissension this church broke up and had to be re-organized in 1879, and again in 1888.[12]

---

[6] *Protokoll, MS. Svenska Baptisternas konferens,* Rock Island, Ill. den 20 Juni, 1856. See also Lagergren, *Efter Sjuttio År, 1852–1922,* p. 32. The minutes of the early conferences are quite complete, and contain much valuable source material in regard to churches, preachers, statistics, etc.

[7] *Protokoll,* 1857 and 1859.

[8] Nilsson. *Diary,* Oct. 4, 1857; July 10, 1858; June 23, 1859; Febr. 1860.

[9] *Historik, Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Chicago, 1866–1906,* p. 12.

[10] *Protokoll,* 1859.

[11] O. Lindh, *Minnen,* pp. 76–77.

[12] Lindh, *Minnen,* p. 76. Lindh gives the organization date of the present Galesburg church 1885. But the history of the church written by the clerk 1897 gives the correct date, namely 1888.

CHURCHES IN IOWA

New Sweden—Gustaf Palmquist was the pioneer among Swedish Baptist preachers not only in Illinois but also in Iowa. To New Sweden, sometimes known as Skunk River, located forty-two miles west of Burlington, Palmquist came as early as in October 1851, and held meetings in Olof Peterson's log house. The small settlement of Swedes was then six years old. Olof Peterson, known as Sailor Peterson, states in his dairy: "The next year, 1852, in the autumn, Palmquist visited us again and preached in Högman's log house, because Palmquist was now a Baptist and had been re-baptized, so he was not allowed to hold meetings in any other house."[13] In May 1853 he brought with him his friend Wiberg who was touring the west, and the two Swedish Baptist founders held a series of meetings in the Högman log house, commonly known as the "Log Chapel."

There were hearts hungry for the gospel, and the proclamation of the New Testament faith was destined to bear fruit. After F. O. Nilsson had returned from his first trip to Minnesota in the fall of 1853, at the suggestion of Palmquist he set out, in the month of December, on a preaching mission to Burlington and New Sweden. Much opposition from the Lutherans was encountered in both places with the result, as is often the case, that Nilsson could report after two months work, "The Lord is doing a mighty work of grace. Several young souls have experienced the grace of God in Christ Jesus."[14] Writing to Wiberg March 6, 1854, Nilsson reported:

> I can now bring you the good news that it has been my great joy, unworthy though I be, to lead twenty-three believing and redeemed Swedes down to the water and bury them with Christ in baptism, twelve here in Burlington and eleven at the Skunk River settlement. Among the baptized are brother and sister O. Peterson, three Carlson brothers with their wives, and Schillerstrom with his wife.[15]

Palmquist now came up to assist Nilsson in the work, and they labored both publicly and privately to bring souls to the Lord. However, what looked so promising to begin with soon turned into bitter opposition. For two Methodist preachers arrived on the scene and warned the people against the Baptist heretics. The result in this case was that the majority were frightened away from the Baptist services. Hardly any dared to come except the believers who were already immersed. This little group of eleven persons was organized into a New Testament church at New Sweden Monday evening, March 20, 1854.[16] Two days later as noted in chapter Four, Hokanson, the local Lutheran pastor, was immersed by Nilsson, but repudiated his baptism after twenty-four hours and returned to the Lutheran fold.

---

[13] Quoted in Ahlstrom, *Swedish Baptists of Iowa,* pp. 110–111. Olof Peterson who later became a Baptist served many years as pastor of the New Sweden church.

[14] Westin. Letters, op. cit. 3:2, p. 128.

[15] Ibid., p. 142.

The New Sweden church, though small in number, had a will to live. With Sailor Peterson as their pastor and leader they continued to grow in membership for some years. In 1872 they reported thirty members. In the fall of 1854, only a few months after the founding of the church, a chapel was built of black walnut and other hardwood logs and ready for meetings the latter part of the year, being finished and dedicated February 10, 1855. It had the distinction of being the oldest Swedish Baptist meeting house in the world, preceding that of the Rock Island church by one year. The building was torn down in 1893.[17]

Burlington—In its early stages the work here appeared very promising. Burlington like New Sweden had several times been visited by Palmquist, and, as stated above, Nilsson spent the winter of 1853 and 1854 in these two fields. Several of the Swedes experienced the new life in Christ, and on Sunday March 26, 1854, thirteen immersed belivers united themselves into a Baptist church, both Palmquist and Nilsson being present and in charge of the service.[18] The "wanderlust," however, soon gripped this small group of Swedish Baptists. In the early summer of the following year, 1855, practically the whole church migrated to Minnesota and became charter members of the Scandia church. "The few members who were left never carried on any aggressive mission work and probably became members of the American church."[19] The present Swedish Baptist church of Burlington was organized in 1881.

Swede Bend (*Stratford*)—This is one of the five churches founded before 1865 that have survived to our own day. The indefatigable missionary founder Gustaf Palmquist traveled as far west as Swede Bend, located on the Des Moines river northwest of Des Moines in Webster County, in order to preach the gospel to the Swedes. It is believed he made his first visit here in the early summer of 1852 before he himself had become a Baptist. The following summer he returned to confirm the saints in their faith. Two brothers, C. J. Star (Stjärnström) and Peter Star, who had been baptized by Palmquist into the membership of the Rock Island church, had settled at Swede Bend. Apparently it was on their invitation that Palmquist renewed his visit at this distant western community in the summer of 1856. The gospel proclamation bore fruit in a gracious revival. Palmquist thereupon sent for A. Norelius, who had been ordained to the gospel ministry a few weeks before, to come and care for the converts. Several were baptized, and on the 28th of August, 1856, a church was organized of fifteen members.[20]

---

[16] Ibid., p. 157. By comparing dates in a letter by Palmquist to Wiberg of April 7, 1854, in which he refers to the organization of the New Sweden church as taking place the Monday before the church in Burlington was founded, it is possible to conclude with absolute certainty that the New Sweden church was organized on March 20, 1854. A statement to the effect that the church was founded May 23, 1854, is found written on the blank leaf of the old pulpit Bible by A. Norelius, who was pastor in 1855–56. See Ahlstrom, *Baptists in Iowa,* p. 112. E. Norelius, *De Svenska Lutherska Församlingarnas Historia,* p. 95, supports the earlier date.

[17] Ahlstrom, op. cit. pp. 110, 120.

[18] Westin, *Letters,* op. cit. 3:2, p. 158. See also Ahlstrom, op. cit. p. 103.

[19] Ahlstrom, op. cit. p. 104.

The growth was slow in the first decade. A membership of 24 was reported at the conference of 1866.[21] Six years later it had more than doubled, standing at fifty-two.[22] In the winter of 1877 the interdenominational and later internationally well known evangelist and missionary leader Franson held revival services at Swede Bend. People flocked in from all directions, walking long distances across fields, through swamps and thickets, to hear the fiery and enthusiastic evangelist and his singer. Both morning and evening every day for several weeks the meetings continued, and many were saved and added to the church. Another outstanding revival was experienced in the fall of 1891 under the leadership of the forceful singer and gifted speaker Betsy Anderson. She simply captivated her audiences. Seventy-five persons professed conversion during this campaign. However, the church at Swede Bend had not experienced only revivals but also deep discouragements, even to the extent of seriously considering disbanding. There were no regular meetings in the meetinghouse, and no parson's family in the parsonage for a long time. The first period of discouragement came in 1868 when many of the leading families of the church moved to Kiron, where they assisted in organizing a church. Other families moved out later. The second disaster was in the early eighties when Charles Lee arrived and was given permission to hold services in the Baptist church. He proved to be an enemy to the true gospel. His preaching caused dissension and a division in the church which it took several decades to heal. Of the one hundred members only twenty remained loyal to the church. For seven years quietness and gloom reigned where once crowds of worshippers had assembled every Sabbath to worship and exalt the name of Jesus.[23]

---

[20] Ahlstrom, op. cit. pp. 125–127. *The Baptist Church Diamond Jubilee,* Stratford, Iowa, 1856–1931, pp. 11, 22.

[21] Minutes of the 1866 conference.

[22] Minutes of the 1872 conference.

The fact that the church weathered the storms was no doubt largely due to the prayers and labors of a faithful few. One of these, in whose log cabin the church had been organized, Johan Fredric Carlson, had a large room, called the "prayer room," in his house, set aside for religious services. Here the company of believers met until, in 1870, they erected their first house of public worship.

CHURCHES IN MINNESOTA

Chisago Lake—In the spring of 1851 the first Swedish settlers of three families arrived at this beautiful lake district of Minnesota, located nine miles west of Taylors Falls and the St. Croix river, where they formed the first Swedish settlement in the state. They were a part of that group of immigrants who had preceded Gustaf Palmquist to America and expected to have him as their spiritual leader.[24] With much anticipation they looked forward to a visit from their prospective pastor in the early spring of 1852. However, due to the fact that no steamers went up to Taylors Falls, and considering it too far to walk thirty miles, Palmquist turned back at Stillwater.[25] Whether he visited his friends at Chisago Lake at some later date is uncertain.

The Lutheran lay preacher in the community suspected an attack from the Baptists in Illinois, and in May of 1853 he announced the coming of several Swedish Baptist families. In February of 1854 another Lutheran authority stated: "The Baptists worship by themselves; occasionally they come to our services and behave themselves quietly and peacefully."[26] The man who became the founder of Baptist work at Chisago Lake, as in so many other places in Minnesota, was F. O. Nilsson. He made his first visit in the community on Sunday June 17, 1854. Norelius, the Lutheran preacher and historian, complained that Nilsson "forced himself in among us in a selfish way in order to make proselytes."[27]

---

[23] *Stratford History,* op. cit. pp. 25–27. *Minnes-Album. Svenska Baptisternas i Iowa Tjugofem-åriga Verksamhet 1883–1908,* pp. 57–59.

[24] See Chapter Two above.

[25] Norelius, *Historia,* op. cit. pp. 545, 546.

[26] Ibid., pp. 548, 549, 560.

[27] Ibid., p. 564. See also Westin. *Letters,* op. cit. 3:2, p. 208.

The exact date of the organization of the church at Chisago Lake cannot be determined with any degree of certainty. Most likely it was either in 1854 or 1855.[28] Nilsson made several trips to this settlement in order to preach the gospel and strengthen his spiritual children in their faith. That this meant much sacrifice is self-evident, for he had to travel some seventy miles from his home in Scandia over almost impassable roads to get to Chisago Lake. What must have been even a greater trial to the preacher was the fact that the spiritual outlook for the little church was not very bright. In 1857 eleven members moved out and started a Swedish Baptist church at Wastado, Minnesota. In the spring of 1859 Nilsson made this sad note in his diary about his Chisago Lake friends, "They have no desire to hold prayer meetings."[29] Indeed, it was a sowing in tears here for the pioneer preacher. The church reported that they had many and bitter enemies to contend with; that they were greatly affected by the removal of members. And finally, in 1862, there was the brief report to the Minnesota State Convention, "All moved to Cambridge—Indian troubles."[30] After a brief history of some eight years, finis was written. But several of its members became active for God in the church at Cambridge.

Wastado (*Spring Garden*)—This place is located in Goodhue County some twenty-five miles west of Red Wing. The first Swedes to move into this community came in the summer of 1855.[31] Two years later a group of Baptists migrated from Chisago Lake and settled in Spring Garden. Eleven of these banded themselves together as a church July 5, 1857, at the home of Jonas Norelius, a brother of Andrew Norelius, and his parents. All of these had been baptized at Chisago Lake by Nilsson.[32]

From the very beginning a strong and aggressive Lutheran element in this whole area made it exceedingly difficult for the Baptists to grow and develop. In 1861, with a membership of only seven, they reported:

---

[28] At the first Swedish Baptist Conference, held at Rock Island, June 1856, Chisago Lake reported a membership of seven. See Protokoll 1856. In the Minutes of the Minnesota Baptist Association, 1856, the year of organization is given as 1855. However, if the same standards are applied in Chisago Lake as in Houston, namely that the holding of religious services is to be considered a church, then the Chisago Lake church would be the oldest in Minnesota, and second in order to the Rock Island church. For it is safe to assume that the Baptists who arrived at Chisago Lake from Rock Island in May of 1853, four months prior to the settlement of Houston, assembled for divine worship as did their Houston friends a few months later.

[29] Nilsson Diary, March 20, 1859.

[30] Minutes of Minnesota Baptist Convention, 1862.

[31] Norelius, *Historia,* op. cit., pp. 675–677.

[32] Nilsson Diary, July 5, 1857.

> This little feeble church has had trials and temptations. Sometimes we thought Satan would put down entirely the standard of the cross. Enemies are on every side, but we still exist as a church in the order of Jesus Christ. Brother Norelius preaches to us once a month, but we have met regularly on the Sabbath, and once in each week.[33]

For some forty years, under the leadership of Sven Christian Nilsson, a brother of F. O. Nilsson, the small church, hardly ever more than a dozen members, kept together. With the death of the leader April 2, 1901, the church disappeared from the records. Was it then in vain, the labor and the sacrifice? No, no, a thousandfold no! For from the little company of Baptist believers in Spring Garden, and more particularly from the Sven Christian Nilsson family, there has come to bless the world a great host of preachers, missionaries and Christian educators.

Carver—The first Swedes, most of them from the province of Västergötland, arrived here in 1854, and located four miles west of Carver on the Minnesota river. Originally the place was called "the Oscar settlement," later changed to "the Union settlement."[34] After a few years some Baptist families moved in, and, according to Norelius, "brought with them a sort of a preacher by the name of Ekbom."[35] Undoubtedly many of them had been brought to Christ by F. O. Nilsson, who at that time was living in the neighboring Scandia, and who frequently preached in the Oscar settlement. On February 28, 1858, a Baptist church was organized with 33 members.[36] Ekbom was ordained as preacher. From the very beginning doctrinal diversities seem to have weakened the church. For their first pastor together with some others, apparently, according to F. O. Nilsson, had difficulties in believing in the doctrine of the trinity.[37] The Lutheran opposition to the Baptists, however, as in the case of Chisago Lake and Vasa, proved to be a greater difficulty to cope with. The Lutheran historian rejoices in the fact that they had succeeded in driving a booze gang out of the community, and then he adds: "The Baptists, who caused us much trouble, went the same way. We prayed, and they (the Baptists) became divided among themselves and moved away."[38] Somehow it seemed that God answered this prayer. After ten years, in 1868, the Carver church

[33] Minutes of Minnesota Baptist Convention, 1861.

[34] Norelius, *Historia,* op. cit., pp. 696–697.

[35] Ibid., p. 700.

[36] Nilsson Diary, March 1, 1858. Minutes of Minnesota Baptist Convention, 1859.

[37] Nilsson Diary, September 20, 1858.

[38] Norelius, *Historia,* p. 732.

reported only eleven members, and soon afterwards the small congregation disappeared from denominational records.

Acton—This place, sometimes known as Swede Grove, and later Grove City, is located in Meeker county, about 75 miles west of Minneapolis. In the year of 1855 the white man made his first appearance in this area. Three men came up the Crow River in a canoe, penetrating "the big woods" to what is now Meeker county. Two years later, in August 1857, there arrived a rather large company of Swedes who braved the wilderness and the trackless forests in search of what to human beings in all ages has been of priceless value—a home of their own.

One of these pioneers wrote from Acton to "Hemlandet," March 2, 1859:

> "There are a great many Swedes here located in several settlements, spread out over an area of some thirty miles east and west. . . . In regard to religious conditions in this place we have no church and no minister. To be sure, we gather on Sundays to read the Word of God, but since some lean toward the Baptist way there can be no unity. Most of us, however, are still loyal to the Lutheran church. The Baptist preacher Nilsson has made one visit here when he distributed Wiberg's book on baptism."[39]

It is also believed that John Erickson and John A. Peterson, lay preachers in the Scandia church, made a missionary tour here in 1858.[40]

In August of 1859, accompanied by the energetic missionary Amory Gale, F. O. Nilsson returned to Acton. After much preaching both publicly and in private from house to house there were several who professed their willingness to follow the Lord in baptism. On Sunday August 14, Nilsson immersed seven believers, who together with five others, previously immersed, organized themselves into a Baptist church. The baptism took place at Hans Peterson's Lake. During the whole service there stood on the near-by shore an enemy of the faith and raved like a maniac against the preacher and all the Baptists.[41]

The church at Acton seemed to prosper. For only a few months later they reported a membership of 21.[42] With their red neighbors they lived in peace. No danger seemed to threaten. Then all of a sudden the storm broke loose,—the terrible Minnesota Massacre in 1862, in which nearly 1000 settlers lost their lives. The Sioux Indians had their revenge on the white man. The fatal day was August 18. Many of the white people in the Acton area were killed. Others succeeded in escaping, leaving homes and everything to the mercy of the mad savages. This marked the end of the small Baptist church at Acton. However, after General Sibley had put down the Indian outbreak the white man soon returned, several of the former settlers together with many new ones. Out of the ashes of the old church there arose in 1866 the present Grove City church.

---

[39] Cited in Norelius, *Historia*, pp. 760–761.

[40] *Fifty Years History, 1866–1916,* of the Grove City Baptist Church, p. 11.

[41] Nilsson Diary, August 14, 1859. See also Grove City History, op. cit., p. 13.

[42] Minutes of Minnesota Baptist Convention, 1859.

Vasa—It was the well known Hans Mattson, who became a colonel in the Civil War, and in the eighties served two terms as secretary of state in Minnesota, that led the first group of Swedes into Goodhue county and became the founder of the Vasa settlement, located about fifteen miles west of Red Wing. Mattson came up to Minnesota from Moline, Illinois, in September, 1853. In the spring of the same year, on April 17, he had been immersed into the fellowship of the Swedish Baptist church of Rock Island. However, for reasons all his own, after a few months he renounced his Baptist faith, and became a leader in the prosperous Lutheran community at Vasa.

For some seven years the Lutherans had almost complete control of the religious activities in this settlement. According to Mattson, however, there was greater religious toleration here than in many other Swedish communities.[43] By 1860 several Baptist families had moved in, and on March 17 of that year a church was organized of 20 members. Eight years later they reported a membership of 49, and full of Christian optimism they wrote to the State Convention: "The Lord has been good to us, and given us some fruit of our labor. We are inclined to work for our Master. Have a house of worship nearly completed, but do not feel inclined to dedicate it until it is paid for. Hope to pay for it this fall."[44]

What made the church at Vasa prominent in the annals of Swedish Baptist history, however, was not a large membership. For it remained throughout its entire history of some forty years comparatively small. It was rather its saintly pastor John Anderson, lovingly called "the Apostle John of the Swedish Baptists," who made Vasa an evangelizing and missionary center of great importance. He was pastor here from 1862 to 1878.

Cambridge—Isanti county has sometimes been called, and rightly so, the Swedish Baptist county of America. It is as beautiful as any part of the state with some one hundred and thirty attractive little lakes.

---

[43] Norelius, *Historia,* op. cit., p. 627.

[44] Minutes of Minnesota Baptist Convention, 1868.

In the early days these teemed with fish just as the woods were literally alive with game of all kinds, providing the pioneers with an abundance of food.

The first Swedish settlers to arrive here were Jonas Norell and Daniel Lundquist who came in 1858 from the province of Hälsingland.[45] Later on there followed in rapid succession many of these sturdy and liberty-loving people from northern Sweden. Religious persecution in the mother country had made life intolerable. In America every one could breathe freely and worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience. In the summer of 1866 there came from the parish of Rättvik in the province of Dalarne one hundred families to Isanti County, and by 1903 it was estimated that of the county's 12,000 inhabitants not less than 10,000 were Swedes.[46]

As previously recorded, most of the Baptists at Chisago Lake moved to Cambridge. These and a few other immersed believers, fourteen in all, met June 17, 1860, at the home of O. Eastlund to organize a New Testament church. A. Norelius of Wastado served as moderator of the council and Amory Gale, the American Baptist state missionary, as clerk. After a thorough discussion of Baptist principles it was agreed to form a church, and call it after the name of the district, the Baptist Church of Cambridge. The order and method of procedure here became characteristic in the founding of Swedish Baptist churches elsewhere. The Bible was always consulted and considered the all sufficient and only rule of faith and practice. At this same time one of the members, M. Smith, was "licensed to preach wherever God in his providence may open a door for him," and he became the first pastor and lay preacher of the church. In the month of July the first baptism took place when, among others, Mrs. Margareta Danielson was immersed. This sister lived to attain the ripe old age of 104 years.[47]

The Cambridge church, or as it was known after its legal incorporation in 1888, "The Swedish Baptist Church of Isanti," was blessed in the early days with a number of lay preachers and gifted leaders, such as Mathias Smith, Peter Anderson, Peter Winlund and Erik Lodin. And it is only fair to assume that their sacrificial labors and wise leadership made a large and important contribution to the true progress of the church. Moreover, this church holds the distinction of having had in the long list of able pastors a trio of preachers of rather unique talents each in his respective field. There was first John Ongman, a man with a resolute will and a forceful personality, a born leader who in the early seventies traveled as missionary among the Swedes of Minnesota and at the same time shepherded the flock at Cambridge. He restored order and confidence after the excitement caused by the teaching of the Sjödin perfectionism. After successfully serving churches both in Chicago and St. Paul, Ongman spent the last forty years of his life in Sweden as one of the foremost religious leaders of the country. Then there was Andrew Blomgren, commonly known as "the Minnesota philosopher." He served the church as pastor during two different terms, nineteen years in all, and his profound mind and keen expository preaching made an indelible impression upon the people of Isanti. The third member of the trio was Olof Engberg, whose wise leadership piloted the church in the difficult years of division. Engberg had a peculiar talent for discovering and interesting Christian young people and encouraging them to dedicate their lives to the Lord's service. There are many preachers and missionaries, both in Sweden and America, who were first sent out into full time gospel ministry by the keen-eyed Engberg.[48]

---

[45] Ernst Skarstedt, *Svensk-Amerikanska Folket i Helg och Söcken.* Stockholm, 1917, p. 48.

[46] Ibid., p. 48.

[47] Original Minutes of Isanti Church. See also Ryden, *Svenska Baptisternas i Minnesota Historia, 1858–1918.* Minneapolis 1918, p. 162; and *Seventy Years History of the Isanti Baptist Church,* pp. 1–2. (MS)

Like most of the pioneers the Isanti Baptists were missionary-minded. They were ready to preach the gospel to their country-men both near and far. As a result several Christian service centers arose in the county, which eventually developed into Swedish Baptist churches. First among these daughter-churches was Fish Lake, organized 1873. About the same time there were services started in a school house a few miles to the south. After a second daughter-church had been founded in Cambridge in 1888, the new center in the south assumed greater importance. For it was felt that the two churches, Isanti and Cambridge, were located too close to each other. Three acres of land were secured on Peter Winlund's farm some three or four miles south of the Isanti church on which a church building was erected. In the month of June, 1892, the new building was dedicated and the congregation moved the center of its work here.

However, some of the old-timers who lived near the old "Tamarac church," which had been a landmark in the community for some twenty years, and which to them had many sacred memories, preferred to worship God in the old place. They felt there should be two congregations. And on April 15, 1893, seventy-one of these met and organized themselves into a new church. Thus it came about in the providence of God, as it seems, that the friendly division tended to the furtherance of the gospel. For the new congregation, known as Isanti North, continued to witness for the Master in the old Tamarac church, later replaced by a beautiful brick structure, and received a deed on the property from the mother church. The original congregation under the name of Isanti South spread the light of Christ in the new location.[49]

---

[48] Ryden, op. cit., pp. 55–63. *Isanti History,* op. cit., p. 7.

In the Isanti church it has been proved time and again that Swedish Baptists are a revival people. Perhaps the most outstanding of such revivals was the gracious outpouring of the Holy Spirit during the pastorate of Allfrid Sjolander, 1884–1886. A letter by this pastor to Nya Wecko-Posten states some of the more concrete results:

> Eighteen months ago there were, with the exception of two girls, no young people in the membership of the Isanti church. Now there is a large group eager to spread the gospel. During this brief period the church membership has increased from 93 to 180. Judging from the hearty cooperation I experienced in the work and the sacrifice made by the church it is safe to assume that the inner growth of the church has been equally great.[50]

[49] Minutes of Isanti church, March 25, 1893; April 15, 1893; May 6, 1893; October 13, 1894. Ryden, op. cit., pp. 164–165; *Isanti History,* op. cit., pp. 8–10; *Nya Wecko-Posten,* February 7, 1894, p. 5. *Nya Wecko-Posten,* December 20, 1910, pp. 5-6.

[50] *Nya Wecko-Posten,* July 22, 1885, p. 3.

CHAPTER SEVEN

AN ENLARGED FRONT

CHURCHES ORGANIZED BETWEEN 1865 and 1870

In many respects it was a new era. "The westward movement of population immediately after the Civil War and the simultaneous expansion of the churches to keep up with the migrating people were but a revival and continuation of the movement which had its first great impetus in the discovery of gold in California in 1848. The panic of 1857 had destroyed for many people in the East every reason for staying where they were and had quickened their ears to the call of the West."[1] In addition to these conditions there were two other factors which greatly stimulated the westward movement. The first was the Homestead Act, signed by Lincoln in 1862. This law, one of the most wise, just, and beneficial enactments ever made by Congress, provided that portions of the public land be given to those who would settle, cultivate, and make permanent homes upon them. Thousands of industrious and home-loving people moved west to establish homes of their own under the protection of this beneficent law.

The second factor which greatly stimulated westward migration was the great increase in railroad building during this period. The railroad mileage in the United States, which totaled about 35,000 miles in 1865, was doubled during the next seven years.[2] "The great empty areas which before had served only to separate the East from the communities in the far West now began to give promise of uniting them into one nation of truly transcontinental extent."[3] The completion of the first transcontinental line in 1869 became first a nine-day's wonder, and then an accepted fact. Little towns sprang up all along the railroads, and churches were not slow to grasp their missionary opportunity in the west.

Naturally the Swedes, just like others, could not fail to be attracted by these new opportunities in America. Immigration from Sweden increased greatly after 1865, and many Swedes in this country left their homes in the older communities farther east to follow the westward trend of the population. Swedish Baptists were no exception. The spirit of "wander-lust" scattered them far and wide in this era, from Minnesota to Kansas and as far west as Dakota and Nebraska. The result was a number of new churches. Had the progress been slow during the first thirteen years, or up to 1865, and at an actual standstill between 1860 and 1865—for no new churches were organized then—now a brighter day seemed to dawn. At least sixteen new churches originated in these years, 1865–1870, and all of them, excepting four, have survived to the present, exercising throughout the years a leading influence in the denomination. These results are so much more remarkable as the time for a trained leadership had not yet come. It was not until 1871 that Edgren started his theological seminary. But it pleased God to use in these days a few farmer preachers, some ten or twelve, to proclaim the gospel of grace among Swedish Baptists. Thus the front was enlarged.

---

[1] W. E. Garrison, *The March of Faith.* New York, 1933, p. 37.
[2] Ibid., p. 41.
[3] Ibid., p. 41.

CHICAGO

Even in the early stages of Swedish immigration it became evident that Chicago had good prospects of becoming the largest and most important center of the Swedish population in America. The main highway of inland emigration to the vast agricultural areas of the Midwest led through Chicago, and once here, it often happened that many did not care or, for various reasons, were unable to proceed any farther. They made Chicago their home. In 1846 the first party of Swedish immigrants, fifteen families in all, reached Chicago. They were poor to the point of destitution. The following year forty more Swedes arrived, and in 1848 a party of one hundred, in 1849 four hundred, in 1850 five hundred, and in 1851–52 one thousand each year. In the course of fifty years the Swedish population of Chicago increased at an exceedingly rapid rate to become a good sized city in itself. According to the census of 1900 there were 151,426 Swedish-Americans in the city, including both those born in Sweden and of Swedish parents in America.[4]

There were many factors that contributed to a ready response to religion in the hearts of the Swedish immigrants. In the first place, they were extremely poor and destitute, and in their misery they were glad to accept both material and spiritual help. In the second place, and what was far worse, cholera broke out among the newcomers in 1849, and continued for several years reaching its climax in 1854. This epidemic caused indescribable suffering and misery among them. One large party of Swedes from Värmland brought with them six corpses when the train arrived at the Michigan Central railway station. Seventeen of the party, afflicted with the disease, were brought to the pest-house, where more than half of their number died before morning. Among the newcomers the death rate was so great that two-thirds of the immigrants arriving in 1854 are believed to have succumbed to the cholera.[5] Add to this the feeling of loneliness and home-sickness which so often affect people who have been uprooted and transplanted in new soil, and the composite result is not only a state of poverty, unspeakable misery, and absolute wretchedness, but also a condition of mind, with its sense of need and dependence, that instinctively turns to God for help and salvation. As has been characteristic of real Christianity in every age and place, so here, a helping hand was extended to the needy, the sick, and the dying. Ministers of the gospel among the various denominations, and other Christian friends, became angels of mercy, working night and day to bring relief to the suffering immigrants.

---

[4] Ernest W. Olson, *History of the Swedes of Illinois,* Chicago, 1908, pp. 301, 306, 307. See also Skarstedt. op. cit., p. 40.

The story of the earliest Swedish Baptist church of Chicago has been told in chapter Five. Though brief in duration, her ministry undoubtedly laid the foundation for succeeding Swedish Baptist work in this area. It was 1866. The Civil War was over and the soldiers had returned home. The Swedish colony in Chicago—originally practically all the Swedes were located on the north side bounded on the north by Division street, on the south by Indiana street, on the east by Wells street, and on the west by the river—had grown into several thousand members. In the winter of 1865–66 a young Baptist by the name of Olof Lindh of Hudiksvall, Sweden, who later became a pioneer preacher in America, had a visit from two Chicago Swedes. These related that there were a few Swedish Baptists in Chicago, but they had no preacher and no church, being scattered like sheep without a shepherd. The young man, who was already somewhat of a preacher and had suffered from "America fever" for some time, decided then and there that if he ever should reach Chicago alive he would try his utmost to start a Baptist church there. He came to Chicago the following summer, and a Swedish Baptist church was organized.

However, the coming of Olof Lindh was only one of many links in the chain of events that the God of history and the great Lord of the church used. About the time that the young Baptist in Hudiksvall made his decision a little group of persons who had belonged to Baptist churches in Sweden met in Chicago, January 16, 1866, at the home of

[5] Olson, op. cit., pp. 306–307.

J. C. Fasten to talk over the outlook for a local church. The meeting, over which Captain R. E. Jeanson of New York presided, was apparently barren of results. The chief obstacles were these:—they had no church building or meeting place, they had no preacher, and they were all very poor. Furthermore, the Danish Baptist church did not seem to encourage the organization of a Swedish church but suggested that the Swedes join them. "Barren of results," was the verdict of one historian.[6] No, not by any means! One momentous decision was made at this little meeting: to continue as heretofore with prayer meetings in the homes twice a week. The First Swedish Baptist church of Chicago was born in prayer.

Not less than nine preliminary meetings were held. They were not in haste, as it seems, but were much concerned about laying a good foundation. They realized the importance of a regenerate membership as a condition for building a New Testament church. Therefore, after it had been decided to organize a church, each prospective member had to give a statement about his conversion and present life in Christ. The need of a preacher, too, was abundantly supplied. For in the summer of 1866, together with other Baptists from Sweden, there came four preachers,—four instead of one—in the month of July, Olof Lindh and N. E. Axling, and two weeks later John Ring and J. H. Ullmark. Their presence in Chicago hastened action in the matter. Finally, on August 19, 1866, the formal organization took place in the edifice of the North Star Baptist Church, which had been opened for the use of the Swedish brethren. On this occasion Ring, Lindh, and Axling officiated. John Ring was called as pastor at a salary of $150.00 a year, and was installed by the laying on of hands and by prayer of the other two brethren. Thirty-eight charter members constituted the new organization.[7]

From its very beginning the First Swedish Baptist Church of Chicago, now known as The Addison Street Baptist Church, was aggressively evangelistic, and as a result experienced a healthy growth both in numbers and spiritual influence. The services were held in the Danish Baptist church as well as in the North Star Church on Division Street until November, when a Presbyterian school house on Bremer street was rented for the purpose. In 1868 the congregation built its first edifice, located on Oak Street between Sedgwick and Townsend Streets. It was dedicated on May 14, and had a seating capacity of 700. Here many destitute and homeless immigrants found temporary shelter and nourishment for their bodies, and, what is more important, had an opportunity to hear an unadulterated gospel proclaimed. On one Sunday more than one hundred newcomers accepted with tears of gratitude an invitation to supper in the church basement.[8] That indeed was the social gospel in actual practice.

---

[6] Olson, op. cit., p. 570. See also *Tjugofem Ars Berättelse,* Första Svenska Baptist-Församlingen, Chicago, Illinois, 1866–1891, p. 3.

[7] Lindh, *Minnen,* op. cit. pp. 61–62. Tjugofem Års Berättelse, op. cit., p. 7, gives the charter members as 28. But since all early church records apparently were lost in the Chicago fire, it is safer to assume that Lindh's statement is correct. He participated in the organization and lists the names of the 38 charter members.

The calamity that befell Chicago through the great fire of October 9, 1871, probably fell more heavily on the Swedes than on any other nationality, because of the fact that these still lived almost exclusively on the north side which was swept by the flames, while other nationalities, being generally distributed over the whole city, partly escaped. Swedish homes were destroyed by the hundreds. Four Swedish churches, as many newspaper offices, and numerous shops and stores owned by Swedes were leveled with the ground. Of the 50,000 people who during the nights following the catastrophe slept out of doors with no protection from the cold but a few garments they had snatched from the flames, probably 10,000 were Swedes.[9]

But all was not lost. They still possessed the power and the will to work and an unflinching trust in the future. Like all the other fire victims, they took up the task of building a new and greater Chicago on the smoking ruins of the old. The scattered members of the Swedish Baptist church, like other congregations, quickly rallied and built a new edifice, seating 300 persons and costing $2,500.00. This was dedicated February 15, 1873. An addition was built in 1876, providing a total seating capacity of 500.[10] During the great influx of Swedes in the eighties the membership of the church increased from 233 in 1880 to 515 in 1890. Having far outgrown the capacity of the church building, the congregation decided in 1889 to erect a new edifice at a cost of $37,000.00. It was located at Milton avenue and Elm street, had a seating capacity of 1,000, and was dedicated the first Sunday in March, 1890.[11] This building was replaced in 1912 by the present stately structure on Addison street.

At least four creative forces entered into the success which the First Swedish Baptist Church of Chicago experienced during her first forty years. First, the rapid increase of the Swedish population on the north side of Chicago. Second, a number of exceptionally well qualified pastors, especially in the field of evangelism and church leadership. Third, a spirit of revival in the church membership. And fourth, a well organized and effective Sunday school and young people's work.

---

[8] *Evangelisten,* October, 1868, pp. 327–328. Lindh, *Minnen,* p. 63. *Tjugofem Års Berättelse,* p. 8.

[9] Olson, op. cit. p. 311.

[10] *Tjugofem Års Berättelse,* pp. 8-9. *Forty Years History, First Swedish Baptist Church of Chicago, 1866–1906,* pp. 20–22.

[11] *Tjugofem Års Berättelse,* p. 10. *Forty Years History,* p. 24.

To have had as pastor, even though for a brief period only, the founder of the theological seminary and of the denominational paper, Captain John Alexis Edgren, must have been a rare privilege. He came in August, 1870, and the ministry of this highly gifted and spiritual man bore a rich fruitage. After the great fire the faithful pastor continued for a while among the scattered flock, laboring sacrificially to cheer and inspire, until, because of failing health, he was compelled to give up the pastorate in the spring of 1872.[12]

John Ongman came from Minnesota in April of 1875. Of him it can be said, "He came, he saw, he conquered." His forceful personality and powerful preaching, with a strong emphasis on sanctification and the Spirit-filled life, made a profound impression upon the church as well as upon the Swedes of Chicago in general. Many were converted under his ministry, a young men's and a young women's organization was formed. The church membership had reached over 300 when Ongman moved to St. Paul in October, 1881. Later on, in 1885–1886, Ongman served a second term in the Chicago First church.[13]

During P. A. Hjelm's term of service, from August 1888, until October, 1896, the church made remarkable progress. The large edifice referred to above was erected to take care of the crowds of Swedes who came to hear the gospel proclaimed by this rather stern, patriarchal and eloquent preacher. It was his privilege to welcome no less than 711 new members, 240 of whom were baptized by him. In the same period there was a loss of 644 through death, removals, and expulsion, leaving a net increase of 67. The principal drain on the membership was caused by the organization of four daughter churches in this period.[14]

At the age of twenty-nine, in November 1896, G. A. Hagstrom became pastor of the First church. With a membership of about six hundred, it was the largest church in the denomination. A strong program of evangelism and a highly specialized system of organization were two outstanding features in Hagstrom's ten years of service. Sunday after Sunday the church was crowded to its utmost capacity by Swedish folk who came to hear the youthful and warmhearted pastor proclaim Christ. Conversions were a common occurrence. During Hagstrom's ministry 638 members were welcomed to the church, 330 by baptism. However, during this same time 558 passed out of the church, leaving a net increase of 80 members. The highest peak in the church's membership during its whole history, 695, was reached in 1898.[15]

---

[12] *Tjugofem Års Berättelse*, p. 12. *Diamond Jubilee History, 1866–1941, First Swedish Baptist Church, Chicago, Illinois*, p. 13.

[13] *Diamond Jubilee History*, pp. 14–15; *Tjugofem Års Berättelse*, pp. 12–13.

[14] *Forty Years History*, pp. 24–26. Olson, op. cit. p. 575.

"In regard to organizations our church is a beehive of activity." This is the historian's characterization of the church at its fortieth anniversary.[16] Nearly a score of different organizations are listed, including a Junior Young People's Society formed in 1896. Most likely it was the first one of its type among Swedish Baptists. For this kind of young people's work is a rather recent creation. With splendid opportunities for Christian training thus afforded, it was not surprising that the young people became a vital factor in the evangelistic efforts of the church among the 16,000 Swedes who lived in its immediate neighborhood. On the other hand there is a lurking danger in organization; it is easily carried to the extreme, and then the spiritual unity of the church is largely undermined and consequently its effective testimony for Christ is impaired. However, so long as the fire of evangelism and revivals was burning brightly in the church each organization became an asset instead of a liability. Periodic revivals as well as a perennial soul-saving continued for a long time in the First Church of Chicago. The peak in baptisms was reached in 1896, when 88 believers were immersed. For several years fifty or more were added to the church by baptism. The largest addition to the membership, however, during the first forty years of the church came by way of letters, and no doubt most of these by immigration from Sweden. Additions by letter in this period totaled 1,303, and by baptism 905.[17]

As early as in the seventies many Swedes had settled on the south side of Chicago, and in the great influx of Swedish immigration in the eighties they were spread over the whole city. That the First Church with its aggressive missionary spirit should promote a program of expansion was natural. Several daughter churches have come into being. Either directly or indirectly the following churches originated from the First Church: The Second Church (Grace Baptist), organized 1874; the Third Church, 1882; the Fourth Church (Roseland Temple), 1882; the Englewood Church (Emerald Avenue), 1885; the Evanston Church,

---

[15] *Diamond Jubilee History,* p. 17. *Forty Years History,* p. 28.

[16] *Forty Years History,* p. 27.

[17] *Forty Years History,* p. 28.

1886; the Lake View Church, 1889; the Salem Church, 1890; the Austin Church (Central Avenue), 1891; the Humboldt Park Church (Fairfield Avenue), 1891. By 1906 the small group of 38 charter members who in 1866 founded the First Church had expanded into fifteen congregations with a combined membership of more than three thousand in the metropolitan area of Chicago. Out of the mustard seed had grown a large tree. To follow the development of each local church is beyond the scope of this chapter. Suffice it to say that this church, under God, contributed its share to make Chicago a center of Swedish Baptist work in America.

NEW YORK

Through the years, many pilgrims from the Northland have come to New York, the great immigration port to the land of liberty. Several of these, some of whom were converted here, became prominent as founders and leaders among the Swedish Baptists on both sides of the Atlantic. Gustavus W. Schroeder, a young sea-captain, heads the list of Swedish Baptists in New York. Having been converted at sea, he was immersed in East River, New York, Nov. 3, 1844, by Ira R. Steward and united with the Baptist Mariners' Church. It was this church which, in the early years while persecution raged against the Baptists in Sweden, so kindly received and befriended those who had come to seek liberty of conscience in America. Those who wished to remain in New York were assisted in getting situations, and others who wanted to go west were aided on their journey.[18] Captain Schroeder was the first to plant the Baptist seed in Sweden, especially through his contact with F. O. Nilsson, in the city of Gothenburg, 1845. This caused Nilsson to become a Baptist two years later. It was in Sweden, too, that Schroeder as a Baptist layman, whenever he visited the country, made strong and self-sacrificing efforts to win others for his new-found faith. In America his influence upon Swedish Baptists was more indirect for he always retained his membership in English speaking churches. Beloved by all who knew him, he passed away in Brooklyn in 1914, at the ripe old age of ninety-three.

Anders Wiberg also came to New York, and was cordially welcomed by the Mariners' Baptist Church. In November of 1852, two months after his arrival, he was engaged by this church as colporteur. He continued this work until August of the next year when he moved to Philadelphia. It was this church also that ordained Wiberg to the gospel ministry, March 3, 1853. Often, in later years, many leading American Baptists would say: "It was the saintly Wiberg who first interested us in the Swedish mission, and we have been interested in it ever since."[19] A. P. Ekman, for many years pastor of the Swedish Baptist Church in New York, felt as if he were stepping on sacred ground when he was walking about in the lower part of the city where Wiberg some forty years earlier, had gone from door to door to present Christ through the spoken and the written word.[20] A good foundation was laid for future work by Swedish Baptists in the large city.

---

[18] A. P. Ekman, Swedish Baptist Growth in New York. *The Christian Inquirer,* December 28, 1892.

In October of 1854 Gustaf Palmquist left his friends and church in Rock Island to become city missionary in New York where he stayed about a year. In view of the steadily increasing stream of Swedish immigrants, many of whom were destitute and had to stay in the large city for some time, it was felt that New York was a very important, even though unproductive, field of labor. Earlier historians have assumed that Palmquist organized a church in New York. This assumption is apparently based on a statement in the minutes of the first Swedish Baptist Conference, held at Rock Island in June 1856, to the effect that the church in New York had a membership of twelve. However, a more reliable account, undoubtedly, is found in a report by Palmquist in The Baptist Family Magazine for December 1857, just as he was about to return to Sweden. This report states that there were nine Swedish Baptist churches in America, with a membership of 246. And besides, there were 26 Swedish Baptists who were members of American Baptist churches. These included 14 in New York, 8 in Galesburg, and 4 in Keokuk, Iowa. Since Palmquist had labored in New York and had personal knowledge of the real facts, the contradiction is best explained by assuming that the secretary of the Rock Island conference had mistaken the Swedes who were members of the Mariners' Church for an independent organization.[21] Moreover, the paucity of visible results of their labor must have been discouraging to both Wiberg and Palmquist. It would be far from correct, however, to pronounce the work a failure. The conversion to Christ and New Testament faith of two young New York Swedes in the middle of this decade had the most far-reaching influence upon Swedish Baptist work on both sides of the Atlantic. The first one was K. O. Broady, who was led to a saving faith in God by Palmquist and who became the founder, and for forty years president, of the Bethel Theological Seminary, Stockholm, Sweden. His conversion occurred February 28, 1855, and the following March 11 he was immersed and united with the Tabernacle Baptist Church. The second of the two was Captain John Alexis Edgren.[22] He came to New York in 1857, the next year he was converted while at sea and was baptized in the Mariners' Baptist Church. In 1871 he founded the Swedish Baptist Theological Seminary in Chicago.[23]

---

[19] A. P. Ekman, *Svenska Baptisternas inom Östra Staterna Uppkomst och Utveckling.* (MS).

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ekman, *Historik Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, New York,* 1866–1900, p. 5. Cf. *Nya Wecko-Posten,* May 8, 1901, p. 5, and May 15, 1901, p. 5.

Regular Baptist work among the Swedes of New York really began with the coming of Captain R. E. Jeanson. This man of God had been converted in Gothenburg, 1861, and baptized by F. O. Nilsson. After his arrival in New York in the spring of 1865 he began at once to gather his countrymen together, and on May 13 he held the first prayer meeting with only three others present in the reading room of Mariners' Temple. It was here, as in many other places, a day of small beginning. On June 4 his first sermon was delivered at the same place to some six or eight persons. The kind-hearted pastor Stewart tried to encourage the discouraged captain by reminding him of the fact that he had as large an audience as Noah had in the ark. Jeanson was afterward appointed by the Baptist Home Mission Society to labor among the Swedes in connection with the Baptist Mariners' Church. In this capacity he served for about two years. The self-sacrificial labor finally began to bear fruit. The people who had been extremely indifferent and hard to reach began to warm up to the meetings and turned out in greater numbers, even up to one hundred and one hundred and fifty.[24] It pleased the Lord to visit them with a revival so that after two years between thirty and forty Swedes were added to the Mariners' Baptist Church. Almost every week some soul confessed faith in Christ. Two prayer meetings were held each week, one in Brooklyn and one in New York. By the end of 1867 there were at least fifty Swedish Baptists in the city. They felt that there was need of a separate organization at this time if they were to carry on the work more effectively.[25]

To supply the need, a small company of thirty-four gathered in the lecture room of the Mariners' Temple on December 22, 1867 and united themselves into the First Swedish Baptist Church of New York. Captain Jeanson was invited to continue his labors and become the first pastor. The American Baptist Home Mission Society engaged him as their worker with the understanding that he raise his own salary, which he also did as an immigration agent as long as he lived in New York. However for five years, 1867–1872, the Society supported a Swedish Baptist city missionary who cooperated with the church in the work among Scandinavian immigrants.

---

[22] Broady enrolled as a volunteer in the Union army of the Civil War and was promoted to Colonel's rank; Edgren served as captain in the Navy at the same time.

[23] Ekman, *Historik,* op. cit. p. 6.

[24] *Evangelisten,* 1867, pp. 366–367. This is a letter by J. E. Molin who worked with Jeanson as colporteur in New York.

[25] Ekman, Swedish Baptist Growth in New York, *Christian Inquirer,* Dec. 28, 1892.

The work now took on a fresh start. New members were constantly added. At the end of the first year the membership had reached 78, of whom 25 had been received by baptism and 38 by letter. The next year 64 joined the church by letter, and at the end of 1869 the membership had increased to 138. Reverses, however, soon came. In spite of a number of additions by baptisms and especially by letters, the membership gradually decreased from year to year. This period of depression lasted for ten years, or until the coming of Lindh in 1881. At least three reasons can be discovered for the apparent failure of the church at this time. In the first place, the movement of immigration continued to flow west in a steady stream.[26] To many of the newcomers New York served only as a stopping place for a few weeks. Often, however, the brief stay in the big metropolis became a source of untold blessing to the lonely immigrant. Many of them found Christ and a richer life in God, and the missionary agency that it pleased the Lord to use was the Swedish Baptist church. The place of the New York church was unique in this respect. Her mission was to share her membership with many of the churches in the western states. But for a few years the constant drain on her own membership threatened her very existence.

A second factor which in the seventies tended to undermine a healthy growth of the New York church was a spirit of misunderstanding and discontent which caused some members of the Swedish church to desert their own work and go to English speaking churches.[27] Apparently the grass looked greener on the other side of the fence. The same unhealthy trend has been seen also in many other Swedish Baptist churches and has drained their membership and sapped their vitality.

Furthermore, there was a lack of leaders who could devote all their time to the service of the church. Captain Jeanson continued his ministry for two years. After him there were two or three others who divided their time between the church and city missions. However, it seemed that the church was financially unable to support a pastor. From 1872 to 1881 appeals for aid to the Baptist Home Mission Society as well as to the City Mission and the Long Island Association were all in vain.[28] The real reasons for this are not so well known, although it is convenient to blame the economic depression of 1873 and the resulting depletion of the funds of the various missionary societies. Moreover, since most of the members lived in Brooklyn and naturally would rather promote some Swedish Baptist project in that area, it seemed quite natural for them to regard the discouraging situation in New York as a lost cause. Noble brethren, however, were found within the church who supported themselves by the work of their hands during the week, preaching the gospel on Sunday and leading the week-night meetings, thus keeping the church from disbanding.

---

[26] Ekman, *Swedish Baptist Growth in New York.* See also *Minnesskrift, Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen i New York, 1867–1917,* p. 11.

[27] *Minnesskrift,* op. cit. p. 11.

A new era! The coming of Olof Lindh is so regarded in the history of the Swedish Baptist Church of New York. In the church minutes of December 13, 1880, there is the following brief statement, "Pastor O. Lindh from Moline, Illinois, was present, and said brother was elected unanimously to become pastor of the church."[29] The sheep, scattered abroad, had finally found a strong shepherd, and the Home Mission Society and the City Mission had become willing to aid in his support.[30] On the first Sunday of February, 1881, the new pastor was on hand and began his ministry. Everything looked discouraging. The church record book showed a membership of 65, but no one seemed to know where they lived or who they were. After three Sundays the preacher was ready to give up in despair. But the Saturday night preceding the fourth Sunday he was led to tarry on his knees before the mercy seat, imploring divine aid in the distressing situation. And God's answer was not long delayed. The Spirit worked conviction in the Sunday morning service, hearts melted and turned in repentance to the Lord. Others expressed a desire to be immersed and united with the church. The happy preacher felt like shouting and dancing for joy. By August that year 55 new members had been added to the church, and in the first eleven months of Lindh's ministry 118 members were received, 32 by baptism, 80 by letter and 6 by restoration. The whole membership had now reached 169, and at the end of 1882 there were 222 members.[31]

In Brooklyn, where sporadic efforts had been made for a long time, religious work of a permanent nature was started and a Sunday school opened in 1882. This flourished and grew so rapidly that the very next year it was felt the time was ripe to organize a church. In December, 1883, the First Swedish Baptist Church of Brooklyn was constituted of 93 members, 85 of whom had received their letters from the mother church of New York.[32] This not only weakened the mother church but it cut off one half, and by far the most fruitful half, of the field, and hence the increase was not so rapid in the years that followed. The church, now reduced to 182 members, moved from their old quarters in the Mariners' Temple where they had been since 1867, and rented the Colgate Mission Chapel in East Twentieth street.[33] In 1887 O. Lindh, after six and a half years of faithful service, moved to Boston. During his ministry in New York he had baptized 154, received by letter about 200, and on experience 30. But the aggressive missionary spirit of Lindh could not be limited to the great metropolis of New York. While there he traveled about in other eastern states and organized seven new churches.[34]

---

[28] Ekman, *Swedish Baptist Growth in New York.*

[29] Quoted in *Minnesskrift,* op. cit., p. 11.

[30] Ibid., p. 14.

[31] Lindh, *Minnen,* op. cit., pp. 147–152. See also Hall, *Svenska Baptisternas Historia,* Vol. 2, p. 82.

The New York church has had one comparatively long pastorate, that of A. P. Ekman. A son of the church and baptized there in 1873, he commenced his work as pastor in November 1888 and continued for sixteen years, or until February 1905. A steady and healthy progress was experienced in this period. By 1905 the membership had reached almost 400.[35] But in the meantime many moved out, having listened to the advice, "Go west, young man!" Another daughter church of 24 members was organized in Arlington, New Jersey. Pastor Ekman was a wise spiritual leader. Under his care and Bible-centered preaching the inner life of the church kept constant pace with the outward growth. To support the pastor's work, the gospel message was brought to mothers and the children in their homes by a lady missionary who divided her time between the church and immigrant missions.

A high point in Ekman's ministry in New York—and undoubtedly many Swedish Baptist churches had similar experiences—was the acquiring of another church edifice. The way the congregation prepared for the transaction is of peculiar interest. It was in the early part of 1899. Special prayer meetings for the deepening of the spiritual life had continued for a whole month. The old church was becoming too small. At that time an offer was received to buy an American Baptist

[32] *Minnesskrift,* op. cit., p. 14.

[33] Ekman, *Swedish Baptist Growth in New York.*

[34] *Minnesskrift,* op. cit., p. 14.

[35] *Nya Wecko-Posten,* May 5, 1908.

church on Fifty-fifth street. In the annual report for that year there is the following statement: "After two months of continuous negotiations and persevering prayer the old church was sold and the new one bought. On the 9th of April, which beyond comparison is the most memorable day in the history of this congregation, the church was opened with great solemnity for divine worship. This was a great step of faith"—an outlay in money of more than fifty thousand dollars.[36]

After Ekman, such well known ministers as Emil Friborg, C. R. Osbeck and Arvid Gordh served the New York church, the last one until 1922 when he became dean of the Bethel Theological Seminary. In a sense this church is a mother church of most of the churches along the Atlantic seaboard, having given many of her members to these churches, as well as to many other congregations throughout the whole country.

[36] Cited in *Minnesskrift,* p. 18.

CHAPTER EIGHT

AN ENLARGED FRONT (Continued)

CHURCHES ORGANIZED BETWEEN 1865 AND 1870

MINNESOTA

In this period five new churches were formed in the state of Minnesota: Stanchfield, Grove City, Fergus Falls, Lincoln and Kandiyohi. The first three have survived as Swedish conference churches and carried on an aggressive work throughout the years. The church at Kandiyohi, never very strong, ceased to exist sometime in the nineties, and the one at Lincoln, after some forty years, joined the American Baptist State Convention. By the end of 1866 there were fifteen Swedish Baptist churches in the whole country with an aggregate membership of about 500. The fact that nine of these churches were located in Minnesota indicated even at that early time the future importance of this state as a field for Swedish Baptists.

Stanchfield

For at least three reasons the history of the Stanchfield church is exceedingly interesting and almost romantic. In the first place, the people in this community came almost exclusively from the province of Dalarne, Sweden, whose inhabitants are known to be intensely liberty-loving and patriotic and of an unconventional and self-reliant way of life. Secondly, not a few of the early settlers, while in Sweden, had suffered much persecution for their faith. They had joyfully endured the spoiling of their goods and suffered the cruel form of imprisonment on bread and water. Truly they bore in their bodies the marks of the Lord Jesus. Thirdly, the Stanchfield church has grown and developed into one of the largest and most spiritually active of all the rural churches in the denomination.

Stanchfield had its origin in Orsa, Sweden, since most of its early settlers migrated from that parish of Dalarne. The first to arrive came in the summer of 1862. A substantial addition was made in 1866 when ten families arrived, including Maser Anders Person, a kindly and quiet man, who had suffered 23 days imprisonment on water and bread;

Päts Erick Erickson, who was said to have weighed each word on a golden scale; and the fiery and lively Spännar Lars Larson Dahlman who was known for his vigor and enthusiasm.[1]

Being Baptists from Sweden and believers of the old "läsare" type, they naturally would place God and his kingdom first even in the land of their adoption. To assemble for spiritual edification without being molested or persecuted was to these pioneers in the New World a marvelous privilege indeed. Their early religious meetings were characterized by apostolic simplicity.

> As the folks came together one had a song, another a particularly precious Bible verse or chapter, which he read. Sometimes a talk or discussion was held on some Scripture that was read; they told of their spiritual experiences, and then prayer would follow. This was the general order of the meeting. Maser Anders Person was one of the leaders in those early days and often had charge of the meetings. He would sing because he was gifted with a beautiful voice, then came the Scripture reading, and the message that followed was often made effective by songs fittingly quoted. During the pioneer days they allowed sufficient time for prayer meetings. Wednesday afternoon was set aside for prayer, and people willingly came together to call upon their God. Herein lies the real secret of their faith and success.[2]

A trait appeared in the Stanchfield settlement that is particularly characteristic of the American frontier as well as of vital Christianity everywhere: the simultaneous emergence of church and school. The Christian church at its best has always been an enemy to ignorance and superstition and a mother and promoter of true enlightenment. These sturdy Baptists of Stanchfield did not hesitate. They knew what they wanted. In 1868 the members of the church and the School District jointly erected a building to be used as a school and a religious meeting place. Thus they solved a real problem and with their meagre means provided education for the mind and food for the soul.[3]

[1] *Diamond Jubilee History. Stanchfield Baptist Church, 1866–1941,* pp. 2–3. See also *Minnesteckning 1866–1916,* p. 14. These two histories of the Stanchfield church are very well written and arranged, and part of the collection at Bethel Theological Seminary. In the historical archives at Bethel Theological Seminary there is an interesting document which throws much light on the sufferings of the early Baptists in Sweden. It consists of a transcript, secured by Emanuel Schmidt during a visit to Sweden in 1912, of the record made at the county prison of Falun, Dalarne, Sweden, relative to a great number of Baptists who suffered imprisonment for their faith in 1854. It contains a detailed description of their crime,—"mockery of the Word of God and the sacraments." Maser Anders Person, then a young man of twenty-four, who heads the list, had received the most severe punishment, 23 days on bread and water. Twenty-eight days of that type of treatment was considered equivalent to life imprisonment.

[2] *Diamond Jubilee History,* op. cit., p. 3.

[3] Ibid., p. 3.

Sometime in the fall of 1866 the Stanchfield Baptist Church was organized of 25 immersed believers.[4] L. Dahlman was elected leader and served as such for about one year. In 1870 he was succeeded by Erick Erickson, the peaceful man of God who was said to weigh each word on a golden scale. For ten years this consecrated lay preacher, ably assisted by other leaders, guided the church through many a storm and laid a good and sound spiritual foundation. Until the end of his life he stood as a pillar in the house of the Lord.

The Stanchfield church, more than the average, was blessed with talented and consecrated lay preachers. It was men of that type, often little appreciated, who came from the ranks of the people and were self-supporting, who, in the providence of God, became instrumental in forming Baptist churches everywhere on the American frontier. Of one of these old-timers the Stanchfield historian makes the following apt remark:

> In Erick Beckman the pastor had a marvelous fellow-worker who was full of the Holy Spirit. He was always seeking for opportunities to testify, and to serve in any way in order that the spiritual harvest might be gathered in.[5]

Olof Fläck was another of God's noblemen and a typical Swedish Baptist pioneer. "He always carried a Bible in his pocket. To whomsoever he met he either read a verse from the Bible or directed a question regarding his relationship to God—'Are you saved?' etc. He was always happy and ever friendly. He was a man of prayer and found his prayer-closet by a stump or rock in the woods or along the roadside."[6]

They knew what they believed and why they were Baptists.

> The Redeemer, Christ, was the chief subject in the testimony of those old heroes and heroines of faith. They considered themselves to be redeemed with a great price, yes, that they were of such infinite value before God, that He, to make them His own, paid a price of far greater value than all the world's treasures of gold. Their faces would glow with joy as they spoke or sang of the Savior, who was slain for them to redeem them unto God with His blood. Sin and grace were subjects that were ever consciously present in their minds and were reflected in their lives before God and men and the angels.[7]

---

[4] Ibid., p. 3. *Minnesteckning,* op. cit., p. 23. Since the original minutes have not been discovered, the exact date of organization cannot be determined with certainty. See also *Svenska Standaret,* Chicago, November 8 and 14, 1916.

[5] *Diamond Jubilee History,* op. cit., p. 5.

[6] Ibid., p. 13.

[7] Ibid., p. 13.

The storm of doctrinal controversies[8] also swept over the Stanchfield church in the early years. First it was the heresy of sinless perfection, a teaching which had made havoc among the Baptists in Dalarne and other parts of Sweden. A few were led astray in the Stanchfield group, and schisms arose with the result that it was thought necessary to dissolve the church. Violent arguments and discussions became the order of the day. But the Lord sustained His people, the faithful few who became the seed of the present church.[9] Later on, sometime in the seventies, Seventh Day Adventism crept in, and several Baptists followed their legalistic teachings, at least for a while. However, due to the wise leadership and thorough indoctrination in New Testament faith by the Stanchfield lay preachers neither Adventism nor any other heresy could find a permanent foothold in that community.

Because of frequent revivals and times of spiritual refreshing, new recruits were often added to the church, and the inner life of the membership was encouraged and strengthened. In this respect the Stanchfield church is a fair type of many Swedish Baptist churches in their growth and development. The first gracious outpourings of the Spirit came in 1876 and 1878. It was Erick Erickson, farmer, preacher and pastor, and Aron Anderson, the farmer-evangelist, both unschooled men, whom God used as His visible instruments in this spiritual crusade. On their knees they had studied the story of Christ's suffering, and with this knowledge and a burning zeal for their neighbors' salvation, they announced meetings in the huts of the pioneers, and sinners were gloriously saved.[10]

As a result of Erickson's and Aron Anderson's meetings, a grave was made for "Old Adam" in the ice of Rush Lake in the middle of the winter 1878–1879. The ice was then from two to three feet thick. Not a few—there were 32 in 1876, and not less than 54 in 1878—stepped down into that grave and were buried with Christ and rose again, with faces agleam with joy, to walk with Christ in the newness of life.[11] In the year 1878 the widely known evangelist Franson visited Isanti County, and also held revival services in Stanchfield. Many were saved, immersed, and added to the church. The year 1886, during Andrew Blomgren's ministry—Blomgren, commonly known as the Minnesota philosopher, was pastor in Stanchfield from 1883 to 1895—the church experienced another spiritual visitation. His deep, yet plain and practical messages touched the hearts of those who came to listen. In that year 60 persons followed Christ in baptism. Two years later the widely-spoken-of Amanda Yman came to Stanchfield. Preaching by women was then a brand new thing among Swedish Baptists, hotly disputed by some, and by reason of that made more attractive to others. She returned the following year, and again in 1893. Large crowds came to see this woman evangelist and to hear her proclaim Christ. The result was that many turned to the Lord and were added to the church.[12] The year 1915 marked another unusual revival. Ensign Charles Nelson of the Salvation Army with his assistants conducted a series of protracted meetings in a tent. Many were stirred and changed by believing the gospel of grace that the evangelist proclaimed. This revival gave the church new life and new hope and in a sense marks the beginning of a steady and sound growth.[13]

---

[8] See Chapter Four.

[9] Whether the original church was actually dissolved, and then reorganized in 1869 is not certain. M. A. Person, writing a resumé of the history of the church in 1878 states that the church had reached a state of dissolution. E. Beckman, in a fifty years historical sketch, writes that the church had to be dissolved. See *Minnesteckning,* op. cit. pp. 17, 23.

[10] *Diamond Jubilee History,* op. cit. p. 13.

[11] Ibid., p. 14.

With a succession of able pastors, fourteen in all, who have provided a balanced and strong spiritual leadership, the Stanchfield church has made a healthy progress and has exerted a powerful influence upon the whole community. A good beginning had been made at two points—Isanti 1860, and Stanchfield in 1866. Other churches arose in the course of years. Among these the Cambridge church, organized in 1888, soon took a leading position among the eighteen churches in this area, and Isanti County became the most Swedish Baptist county in America.

Grove City

Shortly after the Minnesota Sioux Indian massacre in 1862 many of the dispersed members of the little Baptist church (See Chapter Five) returned to the ruins of their burned-out homes. Others came directly from Sweden, chiefly from the southern province of Skåne. Of special importance was the coming of Anders Ekbom, farmer-preacher from Carver, who arrived in 1863. He was a noble representative of the good brethren who in the pioneer days, while they broke the ground and tilled the soil and thus supported themselves and their families, also served as evangelists and pastors.[14] In his home fifteen immersed believers met October 13, 1866, and formed the Baptist Church of

---

[12] *Minnesteckning,* op. cit., p. 33.

[13] *Diamond Jubilee History,* op. cit., p. 5.

[14] A. G. Hall, *Svenska Baptisternas Historia,* Chicago, 1900, Vol. 2, p. 63.

Swede Grove, later called Grove City. Olaus Okerson, for many years pioneer missionary among the Swedes, first in Minnesota and later on the west coast, was in charge of the proceedings.[15] Of particular interest is the fact that a confession of faith was adopted by the new church, the one prepared by Anders Wiberg. The old-timers considered faith and doctrine of primary importance for the nourishment and promotion of a deep spiritual life, and absolutely necessary for the extension of the kingdom of God in the world.

The few and poor members—the pioneers were all poor—had a spirit of sacrifice and a will to live. They received as a donation from the railroad company ten acres of land close to the place where the town of Grove City later was built, and here in 1869 they erected a house of worship. A new building replaced the old structure in 1880. Anders Ekbom, the lay preacher in whose home the congregation was organized, served as the first pastor, also on two later occasions. At the conclusion of his third term in 1874 the membership had increased to 62. A rigid discipline, however, was exercised here as elsewhere among the early Swedish Baptists. Irregularity in doctrine and a sinful life were not to be tolerated in the church. As a result, frequent exclusions tended to keep the membership down. But frequent revivals, too, continued to strengthen the group. In 1876 twenty four redeemed souls followed Christ in baptism, bringing the membership up to 122. The first pastor to receive a salary was Martin Dahlquist who ministered to the church 1869–1872. The congregation promised him $200.00, but the poor members could not raise more than $150.00, and the preacher declared himself satisfied.[16] The kingdom of God has ever been built with sacrifices! O. S. Lindberg, the well known Minnesota pioneer, held the longest pastorate in Grove City church, a period of nine years, and A. P. Ekman, taking charge in 1879, was the first theologically trained preacher. This was a new departure, for in those days the young men trained in Edgren's seminary were regarded with some suspicion, and perhaps a bit of jealousy, by the lay preachers as well as by the members in general. Swedish Baptists were afraid of an educated ministry, for it was largely the educated clergy in Sweden that had instigated the persecution of the Baptists.

The importance of the Sunday school, and increasingly so, as a feeder and training school for the local church can hardly be overestimated. The early leaders in the Grove City church were quick to see the value of the Sunday school, for its origin seems to have been almost contemporaneous with the church. Here the story of Christ and the life more abundant gripped the receptive heart of many a boy and girl, and in constantly increasing numbers new additions to the church membership came by way of the Sunday school. The Ladies Aid, likewise, as in most churches, became an effective agency for the promotion not only of the local work but world wide missions as well. Once a month they met, those ladies, to pray for missions and to raise money for its promotion.[17] And the seed did not fall on stony ground. For it pleased the Lord to kindle a missionary fire in the heart of a little Grove City girl, Esther Lindberg, daughter of Pastor Lindberg, who some years later entered upon active missionary service in Burma. Two young men also, sons of the church, were led to devote their lives to the gospel ministry, A. E. Peterson and Bennet Erickson,[18] the latter well known among Swedish Baptists as a keen theologian and eloquent expounder of the Word.

---

[15] *Femtioårs Jubileum Skrift. Grove City, 1866–1916,* pp. 15–16. *Nya Wecko-Posten,* November 4, 1896.

[16] *Femtioårs Jubileums Skrift,* op. cit., p. 23.

Fergus Falls

Fergus Falls is located in Ottertail county about 175 miles northwest of Minneapolis. It was incorporated as a village in 1872, and as city in 1883. As early as 1869 the first Swedes found their way to this area, at that time a mere wilderness and hunting ground for the Indians. One of these Swedes was Christian Johnson who became a deacon and lay preacher in the Baptist church. Olaus Okerson was the first preacher to visit this settlement. He found a few Baptists scattered here and there in the deep woods, and when he had discovered twelve of them he considered the time opportune to form a church. On August 24, 1870, these twelve believers, six of them from the province of Småland, and six from Gotland, Sweden, united themselves into a Baptist church.[19] The meeting was held in the log cabin of Charles Hallberg with Olaus Okerson presiding.

In the fall of 1872 Okerson moved to Fergus Falls and became the first pastor of the church, serving at the same time as district missionary. An interesting characteristic is the fact that in seventy years of history this church has had twenty-two pastors, each pastor averaging a little better than three years. With some notable exceptions, this seems to be typical of Swedish Baptist ministers. They move often.

---

[17] Minutes of the Ladies Mission Society quoted in *Femtioårs Skrift,* op. cit., p. 31.

[18] Ibid., p. 35.

[19] *Minnesota Historia,* op. cit., p. 146. See also Fiftieth Anniversary History of the Fergus Falls Church; and Sixty Years History of the same church, (MS).

In the long list of faithful pastors the sixth one in order was A. G. Hall, who served the church 1886–1889, and later became the first Swedish Baptist historian.[20]

To spread the good news to other places round about is another prominent trait of this church. Not less than four different daughter churches owe their origin to the church at Fergus Falls. Evansville, organized 1875; Oscar (Rothsay), 1882; Amor, 1890; and Friberg, 1895. The church at Lake Lida, formed in 1894, was an outgrowth of the Oscar church. The congregation soon outgrew the log cabin, where it was organized, and erected its first church building in 1875. A second one was built in 1882, and the present beautiful brick edifice in 1911. This building, as well as the parsonage, was partly destroyed by the great tornado that struck Fergus Falls in June 1919. One family of the church suffered instant death in this storm.

The saddest experience in the life of this church, according to the Fifty Years History, came in the form of internal dissensions and misunderstandings in the year 1895. Nineteen persons demanded to be dropped from the membership of the church, and after many futile efforts at reconciliation their request had to be granted. However, most of these returned to the fold a little later. Through trials to victory! By means of several seasons of spiritual refreshing, as well as the more quiet soul-winning work, the church continued to grow in numbers and missionary interest. The revival services held in the early part of 1915 by the blind evangelist Freeman and his daughter Esther became mountain-top experiences for the Fergus Falls church. As a result of the gracious outpouring of the Spirit in these meetings, J. C. Johnson had the joy of immersing 30 believers the first Sunday he served as pastor of the church. At the sixtieth anniversary of the church in 1930 the membership had reached 253.

IOWA

The state of Iowa shares with Illinois and Minnesota the honor of being the birthplace of Swedish Baptist work in America. Pioneering in this state had been done by F. O. Nilsson, and more particularly by Gustaf Palmquist, at Village Creek, Burlington, New Sweden and Swede Bend. In fact, as stated above, the Village Creek church is at present the oldest Swedish Baptist church in the whole country, with an unbroken history dating back to August 10, 1853. However, after the first few years of pioneering, there was a lull in missionary activity until the coming of Swedes farther west led to the planting of new Baptist churches in Iowa. The year 1868 constituted a new starting point. In the space of two years three new churches arose: Kiron, Forest City, and Meriden.

---

[20] Hall wrote Svenska Baptisternas Historia, 2 volumes, the first on Baptists in Sweden, and the second on Swedish Baptists in America.

Kiron

Again it was the land hunger that gripped the Swedes on the American frontier. In search of new land, a group of men, including C. J. Star, N. F. Rodin and C. P. Frodig, left the old Swede Bend settlement during the early summer of 1867, proceeding slowly over the wild and rolling prairie eighty miles west to the north border of Crawford county in the Otter Creek valley. In September of the same year a larger company of Swedes arrived, and the following spring, induced by favorable reports from the new settlement, there was a considerable addition of families from Swede Bend. The pioneer Baptist preacher Anders Norelius, being influenced to leave Minnesota, purchased eighty acres of land here in 1870, and became a leading character in the new community.[21]

Life on the frontier, in Iowa as elsewhere, was exceedingly primitive. But the crude log cabin in Minnesota would seem a much more likely place of habitation than the dugout on the prairie. Most of the early settlers in Iowa built dugouts, the usual size being twelve by fourteen feet. They were dug out in a hillside, with one end of the house and the two sides entirely, or mostly so, under ground, and the front end, the only visible part of the dwelling, built up of sod. In the center of the front wall was a low door, and one or two small windows. Rafters, long slough grass, and sod served for a roof. Not a waterproof roof, however! According to one dugout dweller: "It was nothing unusual to get out of bed at night to look for a place where it might be dry. Our protection was right under the peak of the roof, where eight or ten of us would line up. The clay floor was soft to walk on while wet. Even after one or two days of sunshine water would still be dripping from the thick roof. Crocks and pans were put on the beds to receive the drippings. There was no chimney; only a sheetiron stovepipe stuck up through the roof directly from the cookstove."[22] With hardly any furniture, and whatever they had, of the crudest type, and with the usual large family of the pioneers, there was yet room in the dugout for the stranger and sojourner. In fact, hospitality was an outstanding virtue on the American frontier.

---

[21] C. J. Johnson, *History of the First Swedish Pioneers of Kiron.* From 1867 to 1915, p. 10. The writer is himself one of the pioneers who came from Chicago to Kiron in 1869. See also Ahlstrom, op. cit., pp. 138–139.

[22] Ibid., p. 140.

From the very beginning, the Swedish settlement in Otter Creek valley of Northwest Iowa showed signs of a vigorous and progressive life. A constant and rapid influx of a physically and morally sturdy type of people from eastern Iowa, Minnesota, Chicago, and Sweden made a basic contribution to the future development of the community. The dugouts were soon replaced by more comfortable dwellings. By 1869, two years after the arrival of the first settlers, four frame houses had been erected. A school house was built the same year. Mail service during the first five years was limited and inconvenient, as each settler had some six to eight miles to the nearest post office. However, in 1873 a post office was established in the Swedish colony, and the name was taken from the brook of Kidron in Palestine, dropping the letter "d" to form the name Kiron. Apparently the suggestion came from the pioneer preacher A. Norelius, who became Kiron's first postmaster, a position which he held until 1891.[23]

Ever since the Pilgrim Fathers landed on the rock-bound shores of Massachusetts, it had been a serious concern with most settlers in North America to provide both education and religion for all the people. The Swedes of Kiron were no exception to that rule. Even before a school house was built in 1869, the settlers met in the dugouts for religious services.[24]

Since most of the people were Baptists, or inclined toward Baptist views, some of them being personal friends and converts of Gustaf Palmquist from his pioneer missionary labors in Minnesota, Illinois, and Iowa, it was natural that the need would be felt for the organization of a Baptist church.

On August 18, 1868, eighteen immersed believers met in the home of C. P. Frodig and organized a New Testament church. Frodig was elected elder and pastor; N. Lindberg, deacon; and C. J. Star, secretary. The Baptist Confession of Faith, as prepared by A. Wiberg, was adopted. Good leadership, always a condition for success, became from the very beginning a source of much blessing among the believers at Kiron. C. P. Frodig had already served as lay preacher in the Swede Bend church. With character above reproach, he was safe and sound as an expounder of the Word and he was careful about church discipline. H. Hallander was the most fluent public speaker in the group. He had attended the Gustaf Palmquist Bible school in Stockholm and had done some preaching in Sweden. As a singer, too, he was gifted with a good voice which never failed to make a deep impression for God in the community. C. J. Star, having served as one of the first trustees in the Rock Island church, was a man of wise judgment, which proved to be a great asset in both the church and the community.[25]

---

[23] *History of Kiron,* op. cit., pp. 10, 12, 13, 15, 20.—Ahlstrom, op. cit. pp. 140–141.

[24] *Seventy-Fifth Anniversary History of the First Baptist Church of Kiron, Iowa,* 1943, p. 6.

The primitive dugouts and sod houses served as the first sanctuaries. From 1869 to 1876 the school house was used for this purpose. The meetings were conducted along the lines of free testimony, exhortations and prayers, very similar to services in the apostolic church. The preaching was not sensational but interesting and helpful. The power of the Holy Spirit prevailed, and the members loved one another. When they met together at the homes for a social or any other kind of a gathering, whether many or few might be present, it was customary to read the Scriptures, sing together, and pray to God.[26] That was the kind of spiritual atmosphere which promoted growth and development. After about four months the membership had increased to 31, and by the end of 1869 it numbered 52.

An undisturbed peace, however, was never promised to the children of God. The enemy sowed his tares among the wheat. Seventh Day Adventism with its stress on legalism and salvation by works rather than through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus made inroads in the community and played havoc with the faith of the believers. In the spring of 1874 there was so little spiritual warmth left in the church that out of a membership of 87 only 36 persons agreed to remain in the organization. "In June, however, some chilled hearts began to thaw out, and 29 came back to the fold."[27]

Churches on the American frontier, and more particularly the Baptists, have grown strong by means of frequent revivals. That turned out to be the case in Kiron also. In the midst of divisions and disturbances both from within and without, it pleased God to visit the little group of faithful and praying believers in the Kiron church with a gracious outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Fresh from the school came N. Hayland, the first graduate of the Swedish Baptist Theological Seminary, into the new west. He arrived at Kiron in the fall of 1875. Meetings were held almost daily throughout the winter with the result that about one hundred persons turned to Christ and believed. The coming of Hayland marked the beginning of a theologically trained ministry among Swedish Baptists, and it was undoubtedly providential that the forerunner was so mightily used by God and made such a favorable impression upon the people as he did. Morever, he was a brilliant speaker, and a gifted singer and musician, and, best of all, filled with the Spirit of God. As a direct result of this spiritual awakening, pastor Frodig had the joy of immersing fifty converts in the Boyer river, March 8, 1876, and later in the summer, twenty more believers took the same step of obedience to Christ. At the New Year, 1877, the membership had increased to 160.[28] A considerable progress, indeed, in those first eight formative years!

---

[25] Ahlstrom, op. cit., pp. 145–146. *Anniversary History,* op. cit. p. 6. About Hallander see also a brief sketch in *Nya Wecko-Posten Kalender for 1916.*

[26] *History of Kiron,* op. cit., p. 32.

[27] Ahlstrom, op. cit., pp. 147–148.

But again the storm broke loose. Adventism still caused trouble, and in the late seventies the new-fashioned view of the atonement, and even universalistic ideas, gained entrance among the Baptists of Kiron. John Ring, who was the first pastor on a full time basis, and who had ministered to the church for three years, 1877–1880, found himself unable to cope with the difficulties. However, before he left, realizing dangers ahead, and in order to safeguard the church property, he advised the trustees to have the church legally incorporated. This they did, and that brought the storm to a climax. Again, as six years before, only thirty-six members remained who were willing to sign the original confession of faith. The others, some over one hundred members, separated themselves from the fellowship of the Baptists in 1880, and organized the "Church of God."[29] L. J. Ahlström, the Iowa Baptist historian, succeeded Ring as pastor. He moved to Kiron in the fall of 1881..Tact and wisdom prevailed, and order was again restored. Former members began to reapply for membership in the church, and new converts were immersed. In 1885 a new church was formed north of Kiron composed of members who had moved out from the original settlement. This became the Swedish Baptist Church of Arthur. Another revival under the leadership of the fiery lady evangelist Betsy Anderson brought new life and spiritual vigor to the Swedish Baptists of Kiron.

Of the long line of leaders and preachers in the Kiron church, from the early lay preachers to A. G. Lagerquist, "the bishop of Iowa," and his worthy successors, there is honorable mention made in "Pioneer Memories" by Waldemar, of the man who heads the list, a noble representative of that large class of lay preachers among Swedish Baptists:

---

[28] *History of Kiron,* op. cit., pp. 32–33. Ahlstrom, op. cit., p. 148.

[29] Ibid., pp. 148–149. Anniversary History, op. cit., p. 10.

"C. P. Frodig was a very fine man, willing to help everybody. If any one got into trouble Frodig helped him out. He was the only doctor and undertaker in this locality for several years. When a person died he made the coffin and delivered the funeral sermon. When any one desired to be baptized he was ready to perform the ordinance. When people wanted to get married Frodig tied the knot."[30]

In the way of meeting places the Kiron church experienced a healthy growth and development. The first sanctuary was the primitive dugout where the pioneers worshipped their God in the beauty of holiness. What a marvelous transformation had taken place in forty years—from the dugout to the spacious and beautiful temple, erected under A. G. Lagerquist's supervision and dedicated to divine service in December 1908! Between these two extremes there was the little school house in which the Baptists held their services in the early seventies, and the first church building constructed in 1876, and replaced thirty-two years later by the present sanctuary.

The Kiron Annual Prayer Conference, instituted in the fall of 1905, attracted much attention, especially for a few years in its early history. It was a week of Bible study and prayer when ministers and others from Iowa and neighboring states assembled to draw near to God. Influenced in its early stages by some leaders of the "new movement,"[31] this prayer conference might have become a little Keswick among Swedish Baptists. And many saints experienced here during days of united prayer a new infilling of the Holy Spirit, while the Kiron church also in this way extended its influence far outside of the local community.

Meriden

This church was organized September 27, 1869, of five members. Internal difficulties and dissensions hampered its growth, and after some sixty years of struggle for existence the organization disbanded. However, it would be unfair to conclude that the labor expended was all in vain. For even here there were souls saved, and several of the converts moved out and organized a church at Linné, California, while others settled at Orleans, South Dakota, and became the founders of Baptist work in that community. And thus, true to the very nature of the gospel, the light continued to spread to other places and guide the wayfarer to the Father's house.

---

[30] Cited in Ahlstrom, op. cit., p. 153.

[31] "The new movement" (den nya rörelsen) was a movement among Swedish Baptists from 1907 and succeeding years, which, in some respects akin to Pentecostalism, stressed the deepening of the spiritual life.

Forest City

The Forest City Baptist pioneers hailed from the province of Skåne in southern Sweden. Here they suffered much persecution for their faith and decided to seek a refuge in America. The forerunner was a young lay preacher by the name of Martin Dahlquist, who arrived in 1867 and settled at Rock Creek, Mitchell county, Iowa. After two years he returned to Sweden and induced a goodly company of neighbors to emigrate, including twelve Baptists. They arrived at the Dahlquist home, Rock Creek, in April 1869.

Some time between June and December, 1869, these twelve immersed believers banded themselves together into a Baptist church.[32] The following year some of the members moved farther west and located at Forest City in north central Iowa. By 1872 the whole congregation had settled here. About the same time another group of immigrants arrived from Sweden and took up farming east and north of Forest City. A spiritual revival surged through the community, and many were converted and added to the church by baptism. This displeased the enemy of souls. A period of reaction set in, especially in 1878 and 1879. Here, as in so many other places, it was Seventh Day Adventism that became the disturbing factor. But time and again as it pleased God to revive His people, order was restored, and a healthy increase in membership was experienced. In the year 1900 a church building was erected in town, replacing the old sanctuary outside the city limits.

SOUTH DAKOTA

Previous to the year 1869 Swedish Baptist work had been limited, with the single exception of the city of New York, to the tri-state area of Illinois, Iowa, and Minnesota. This year, 1869, however, witnessed a considerable advance into new territory. The Swedish Baptists extended their activities to four more states—South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, and Wisconsin. South Dakota, or as it was known before 1889 when the state was formed, Dakota Territory, was virgin soil in more ways than one. The first settlers were terrified by the fierce blizzards, sweeping over the country on the wings of the north wind. But they were "giants of the earth" those Dakota pioneers, both able and willing to suffer hardship and privation in order to build homes for themselves and their loved ones on the wild and trackless prairies.

---

[32] The church minutes do not go back farther than the year 1896. A letter in "Evangelisk Tidskrift" for March 1884, p. 105, states that the church was first organized in 1872, but due to internal trouble had to be reorganized December 26, 1876. However, there is in existence an old register which bears the date 1872, containing the names of 68 members of whom about half had joined the church previous to 1872. Furthermore, a careful questioning of old-timers seems to bear out the conclusion that Forest City church was formed in the latter part of 1869. See also Ahlstrom, op. cit., pp. 172–174; and *Minnes-Album, Svenska Baptisternas i Iowa Tjugofem-åriga Verksamhet, 1883–1908,* p. 33.

Big Springs

Big Springs, formerly known as Union Creek, in Union county, is located in southeastern South Dakota, some fifty miles south of Sioux Falls and forty miles west of Sioux City, Iowa. The first Swedish immigrants came here apparently in 1868. Others arrived in the spring of 1869, the majority of whom were Baptists from the province of Närike. They set about to dig their first homes, the dugouts, in the hillsides. Later on they built sod houses, which "were mansions in comparison with the dugouts." In this land of blizzards, where neither trees nor bushes grew in those early years, the fuel question often became a serious problem, even more so than food. Frequently the first question asked of a neighbor was, "Have you anything to burn?" The prairie fire was another menace. This red-tongued enemy came leaping over the prairie at a terrific speed, spreading devastation in its path and horror in the hearts of the pioneers.[33]

However, neither the destructive elements of an unfriendly nature, nor privations and sacrifices of every sort, could prevent these Swedish immigrants from erecting an altar to the Lord. They had suffered persecution for their faith in the old country, and knew how to value the religious liberty of the New World. In the company of immigrants that arrived in the spring of 1869 there was a man by the name of P. A. Ring who had been preaching the gospel in Sweden for some time. The first Sunday he was there, he invited the Swedes of the settlement, both Lutherans and Baptists, to a divine service, the first one ever held in that area. A few of them who had been members of a Baptist church in Sweden, naturally realized their need of an organized work. Early in July of 1869 they met in Ring's sod barn, just completed, and formed the Big Springs Baptist church.[34] There were seven charter members. Ring was chosen to preach and to lead the public services. And this he did with the blessings of the Lord upon his ministry, extending his missionary activities farther west to Bloomingdale and other communities.

---

[33] *A History of the Big Springs Baptist Church* (MS) 1869–1929, pp. 1–2. See also *Historik, Big Springs Baptistförsamling, 1869–1894,* pp. 1–2.

[34] The exact date of the organization cannot be determined with certainty, as some of the early records are lost. In a letter to *Zions Wakt,* January 1875, P. A. Ring states that the church was formed in the spring of 1869. Since this was written only six years after the event, it is likely to be correct.

The story of the Big Springs church is similar to that of other churches, a story of difficulties, differences, dissensions, and—glorious revivals. Through storms to victory! Souls were saved, the kingdom of God extended, and churches planted in other parts of the state. During the winter of 1873–74 the church enjoyed a visitation of the Lord under the leadership of Ring. The whole community was stirred, and as a result seventeen persons were immersed in the spring of 1874.[35] At the end of that year the membership had increased to seventy-five.[36] Their first meeting-house was also erected in 1874.

The years 1876–1887 proved to be a period of dissension which thwarted progress. As in so many other places, it was the sabbath question that caused the disturbance. Some of the church members kept Sunday and others Saturday for a time. The leader, P. A. Ring, observed the two days and ministered to both groups. By so doing he apparently hoped to win the whole church over to the Seventh-day view. However, a break was finally forced in April, 1876, when five of the Seventh-day keepers were excluded, among them Ring. He remained a Seventh-day Baptist until his death and never joined the Adventists. A brotherly relation always existed between him and the church he had founded, and he was often called to speak in the Baptist meeting house. But the end of trouble was not yet. Several more were excluded because of the sabbath question. Personal grievances added to the difficulties. During a visit of A. P. Ekman, then general missionary to the Swedish Baptists, a whole day was set aside for reconciliation between the members. The trouble, however, seemed too deep-rooted. In the years 1884–1885 when C. M. Widen, pastor at Bloomingdale, in addition to his own field reluctantly assumed the responsibility for the Big Springs church also, the situation had become exceedingly critical. These were undoubtedly the darkest days in the history of the church. It came very near to dissolution. A number of members withdrew, others were excluded, and the remaining few became disheartened.[37]

A brighter day, however, was in the offing. By means of several gracious revivals, divisions were healed and the church was lifted to a higher plane of spiritual life. Twenty-two converts were immersed and added to the group in May of 1887. The coming of Andrew Johnson as pastor that same spring marked a new era in the history of the Big Springs church. Ever since then the church has had regularly settled pastors, and has experienced a steady growth and development. In the winter of 1890 there was another outpouring of the Spirit which brought new and progressive leadership into the church. Two years later it pleased the Lord again to visit the community in a mighty work of grace. Some seventy-five persons turned to Christ, fifty of them being added to the church. Several of the new converts were non-Swedes, and from that time can be reckoned the beginning of a larger community work.[38]

---

[35] *History of Big Springs Baptist Church,* op. cit. p. 3.
[36] *Zions Wakt,* January 1875.
[37] *History of Big Springs Baptist Church,* op. cit., pp. 4–6.

The Big Springs church has been blessed with a number of outstanding preachers and leaders. Foremost among these was undoubtedly Christopher Silene who held the charge for five years, 1895–1900. He was a doctrinal preacher and a deep thinker, who emphasized the training and grounding in the Christian faith of the members. A strong leadership to bless the church for years to come originated in that teaching ministry. Three rather long pastorates followed Silene's term of service: Swaney Nelson, 1900–1909, during which period work was begun and organized into a church at Alcester; Ragnar A. Arlander, 1909–1920, a period marked by great building activities, the church edifice being remodeled and a new parsonage built; and B. L. Carlton, 1920–1934, during which period still further growth was experienced in material progress and community influence.

NEBRASKA

Geographically Nebraska is located in the center of the United States. Even before it was admitted as a state into the Union in 1867, Swedes had found their way as far west as Omaha. As early as 1866 a group of Scandinavian Baptists met here for religious services conducted by a theological student by the name of N. C. Jensen. At the beginning of 1869 a Scandinavian Baptist church was organized in Omaha. However, the work seemed to be of short duration, for in 1873 some of the leaders moved to the west coast and the church was dissolved.[39]

Oakland

Oakland, located in eastern Nebraska midway between Sioux City and Omaha, has been termed "the Queen of the Logan Valley." According to a local historian, this area is "one of the most fertile and prosperous agricultural sections to be found anywhere in the world."[40] In 1867 the settlement of Logan Valley began in earnest. Among the first Swedes to arrive that year were Victor Carlson and John P. Anderson. Being Baptists from Moline, Illinois, they had come in search of new land, taking up homesteads close to the future site of the city of Oakland. They were soon joined by others, relatives and friends, who took up claims in the neighborhood, and in the spring of 1869 there had arrived so many who held scriptural convictions concerning baptism and church membership that the question of effecting an organization could be considered.[41] As was true of so many of their fellow-believers, several of these Nebraska pioneers had suffered bitter persecution in Sweden at the hand of the state church, and they responded eagerly to the opportunity of establishing worship of God in a free country.

---

[38] Ibid., p. 8. See also *Nya Wecko-Posten,* June 27, 1894, p. 2.

[39] *Några Historiska Drag av Vår Mission i Nebraska,* by A. Sjölander. (MS) p. 2. See also *Svenska Baptisterna i Nebraska, 1869–1919,* by C. R. Osbeck, p. 54.

Accordingly a meeting was called on June 24, 1869, in the home of Olof Nelson for the purpose of organizing a church. Assisting, as council, in the organization was N. E. Axling from Rock Island, Illinois, who had come out to visit the colony, together with four American Baptists from nearby churches. One of these, I. C. Jones, pioneer missionary and pastor at Silver Creek, had for some time regularly visited the Oakland settlement, and preached the gospel with considerable success. He also continued with this work, and served as pastor of the Swedish church until September, 1871. Of the sixteen constituent members, eight brought letters of dismissal from the First Baptist Church of Omaha, six from the Swedish Baptist Church of Rock Island, Illinois, and two from the Baptist Church in Motala, Sweden.[42]

The first fourteen years was a period of both growth and internal struggle in the Oakland church. N. E. Axling, who had settled in the community on a farm which he had purchased on his first visit in 1869, was called to be the minister of the church in the fall of 1871. He continued as pastor about a year. Several more or less temporary preachers succeeded him. Charles Sandquist became the second permanent pastor and held the charge between 1877 and 1879, when Axling again assumed leadership. The membership experienced a steady numerical growth, reaching 63 by 1877, and 79 in the year 1879. A church building was erected in 1880, which, with certain improvements and additions, served as meeting house until March, 1919 when the present beautiful structure was dedicated. However, not only progress and victories but times of severe testing and sifting characterized the early years. The cause of this must be sought in the habit of some of the pastors, often a tendency of the pioneer preacher, to constantly discuss and over-emphasize doctrinal subject of a speculative nature. As a consequence the spiritual life suffered, and dissension and confusion prevailed. A. P. Ekman, at that time general missionary of the Swedish Baptist General Conference, was called in to assist in settling the difficulties. He came to Oakland in March of 1883. The result of the investigation led to the exclusion of thirty members. Others were dropped from the roll at their own request, and the membership was reduced to fifty.[43]

---

[40] *Fifty Golden Years, 1869–1919. First Baptist Church, Oakland, Nebraska,* p. 5.

[41] Ibid., p. 11.

[42] *Fifty Golden Years,* op. cit., pp. 13–16. *Svenska Baptister i Nebraska,* op. cit. pp. 5–7. See also *Nya Wecko-Posten,* July 11, 1894, p. 4.

In the midst of this time of stress Lauritz Johanson assumed the leadership of the Oakland church. He arrived in June, 1883, and began an unusually long and successful ministry of twenty years. The few and discouraged believers took new courage. During the first year of his pastorate the membership was nearly doubled, forty-three being added to the church. There were times of revival and times of apparent quiet, but under the wise and able leadership of this man of God a healthy and steady advance was made. A parsonage was built and the church edifice remodeled. The missionary spirit took deep roots in the church with such results that not less than ten young people in this period entered the ministry and missionary work, foremost among these being the Ola Hansons, for forty years missionaries to the Kachins in Burma. On the twentieth anniversary of Johanson's arrival in Oakland the church arranged a great celebration in his honor. It was the first occasion of its kind in the history of Swedish Baptists. One of the young men paid his pastor the following beautiful tribute:

> As a pastor, I consider him kind and compassionate; in spiritual matters, safely confidential and absolutely reliable; a conservative and judicious man in matters of our personal concern. In him we have a friend, unpretentious and unassuming, of whom it can be said that the same opinion formed of him twenty years ago still pictures the man, his personal manhood and true Christian character.[44]

Following in the footsteps of the pioneers and their God, the Baptists of Oakland have continued to work in their own community as well as sending the gospel light out to the uttermost parts of the earth.

---

[43] *Fifty Golden Years,* op. cit. p. 22. *Svenska Baptister i Nebraska,* op. cit., pp. 7–8. *Några Historiska Drag,* op. cit., p. 5.

[44] *Fifty Golden Years,* op. cit., pp. 25–30. See also *Nya Wecko-Posten,* July 25, 1900, p. 5; and June 23, 1903, p. 5.

Estina

> *"The Church on the Prayer-Hill."*—In the year 1869 brother G. Wicklund walked from Omaha to the place where the Estina Swedish Baptist Church now is located. When he reached the hill and looked down upon the wide and treeless prairie, without any human habitations, he kneeled down and thanked God for his protection and prayed that the Lord might permit him to share in building a house for divine worship on that spot. A year and a half later the pioneers formed a Swedish Baptist church, and a house of worship was erected, the Estina Baptist Church, on the very hill where Wicklund first had petitioned God concerning this matter.[45]

Other Swedes soon moved into this place in Saunders county, and on September 3, 1870, seventeen immersed believers, with N. E. Axling as chairman of the meeting, formed the Estina Baptist Church. P. O. Hjeltman, one of the settlers and a man with a rich spiritual experience and a Christ-like character, became the first pastor. A gracious revival visited the community in 1874 with the result that eleven converts were immersed and united with the church. One of these was Fredrik Franson who became the Hudson Taylor among the Swedes of America. The small church on the hill, in membership never reaching fifty, continued to spread its light both near and far. Several of the members, however, moved to Mead, and others to Valley, where they organized churches. The drain proved too heavy for the church of Estina. In 1917 the few remaining members decided to disband, and the property was deeded to the Swedish Baptist Conference of Nebraska.[46]

Was it then in vain, the labor and sacrifice of these Nebraska pioneers? Certainly not! For if nothing else had been gained, the conversion of F. Franson would have been worth all the efforts. In the providence of God he became the great missionary and mission leader who sent out scores of young people as missionaries to China and Japan, and inspired thousands of others all over the world to take an active interest in evangelizing the world.

KANSAS

The first Swedes made their way to Kansas in the early fifties. In 1855 they settled in Pottawatomie county in the northeastern part of the state and founded the prosperous colony of Mariadahl which became a Lutheran stronghold.[47] Anders Ahlquist was the first Swedish Baptist to arrive in Kansas. He had immigrated to America in 1861, and had become a Baptist in Village Creek, Iowa, the following year. In the fall of 1868 Ahlquist and family, together with his brother-in-law, Ola Erlandson, and Nils Nilsson, moved to Neosho county in southeastern Kansas. Here at Swede Center he found a small settlement of his countrymen from Dalarne, who had just come from Lawrence. The following year a considerable number of immigrants arrived directly from Sweden. Among these there were several Baptists and three lay preachers.[48] Joyfully they endured all the hardship of pioneer life on the wild prairies of Kansas, with its poverty, loneliness, disease, and privations of all kinds. For here they found that priceless treasure denied to them in the mother country, namely liberty of conscience and religious freedom. Nor were they long, these liberty-loving Swedes, in taking possession of the blessings offered to them in the New World.

---

[45] *Svenska Standaret,* September 16, 1914, at the 44th anniversary of the church.

[46] *Svenska Baptister i Nebraska,* op. cit., pp. 15–18. See also *Nya Wecko-Posten* September 25, 1895, p. 2.

Chanute

Most of them had arrived in April, 1869, and on the 27th day of May the same year they organized, with eighteen charter members in the home of Anders Ahlquist, the first Swedish Baptist church in Kansas. The church became known as "The First Swedish Baptist Church of Neosho County." Farmer preachers carried on the work during the first ten years, and proclaimed faithfully the gospel in the homes and school houses. By means of a stirring revival in 1873 the membership increased to eighty. Another revival in 1877 added not a few to the church. However, trials and difficulties of many kinds tested the faith of these sturdy pioneers almost to the breaking point. On account of drouth, chinch bugs and grasshoppers during the years 1873 and 1874, the crops were almost a total failure. As a result several families of the colony packed up what little they had and moved to other parts of the country.[49] But dissension within the church proved a greater calamity than drouth and grasshoppers. Apparently this trouble was caused by an inordinate desire of some members to exercise authority. Seventh Day Adventism also caused much disturbance. Then, too, a feeling came to prevail that the church was not properly and scripturally organized. Hence it was considered advisable to re-

[47] Skarstedt, op. cit., pp. 50–51.

[48] P. Lovene, *History of the Swedish Baptist Churches of Kansas and Missouri 1869–1927*, p. 9.

[49] *Fifty Years History of the Grant Avenue Baptist Church, Chanute*, pp. 6–8.

organize, which took place February 14, 1880. The present church at Chanute considers this date its correct historical beginning.[50]

The reorganized church adopted the name "The Swede Center Baptist Church," later changed to "The Grant Avenue Baptist Church." A. J. Bengtson became its first pastor. A church building was erected in Chanute in 1885, and the main part of the work was gradually moved from Swede Center to Chanute. From here the gospel light continued to radiate to other parts of Kansas, and even to the dark Catholic continent of South America. One of the faithful pioneer preachers, Anders Nilson, who came here from the province of Nerike, Sweden, in 1869, had a son, Eric A. Nelson, who dedicated his life to God and foreign missions. As great work as the small church of Chanute has done, it is not unlikely that in the future it will be remembered more by the fact that the faithful and fearless missionary, E. A. Nelson, here had his home, here was brought to Christ and from here went to his life-work in Brazil. He went there on his own in the year 1891, without any missionary society behind him, but after some years the Southern Baptist Convention enlisted him as its missionary.[51]

WISCONSIN

About twenty years after Unonius had founded at Pine Lake, west of Milwaukee, the first Swedish settlement in America since the time of the Delaware Swedes, Swedish immigrants began to arrive in Burnett county of northwestern Wisconsin.[52] In 1860 there were twelve white people in the county, and in 1868 there may have been more than two hundred, mostly Scandinavians. In the fall of 1868 seven Swedish Baptists reached what is now known as the Trade Lake community,[53] and they became the forerunners of Swedish Baptists in Wisconsin. In the early part of the following year five men walked all the way from Chicago, some five hundred miles by the route they followed, and took homesteads a few miles to the north of Trade Lake. These, together with other immigrants, formed the nucleus of the Swedish Baptist Church of Wood River. Here as elsewhere on the American frontier it was the land hunger, that mighty factor in the migrations of people, and a desire to possess a home of their own, that justified the sacrifices and privations of the pioneers.

---

[50] Records of the original church are missing. Some believe it was dissolved 1877. See *History of the Swedish Baptists of Kansas* by J. A. Huggerth and Gustaf Nyquist (MS) p. 12. *Fifty Years History,* op. cit., p. 15, doubts that the first church was dissolved at all. See also *Historik, Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Chanute, Kansas,* 1880–1905, p. 6.

[51] Lovene, op. cit., pp. 9–15.

[52] See Chapter One.

[53] L. J. Ahlstrom, *Femtiofem År i Vestra Wisconsin,* Minneapolis, 1924, p. 95. See also *Diamond Jubilee History of the Trade Lake Church,* 1944, p. 7.

Trade Lake

At the coming of the first Swedes to this part of the state, there was only one school house between St. Croix Falls and Superior, a distance of over one hundred miles. This was the so-called Knut Anderson school house located a few miles to the south of the present site of Grantsburg. Here the Baptists met for spiritual edification, especially after the arrival of John Ring in the spring of 1869. Having preached the gospel in Sweden, and also for three years in Chicago, he naturally became the leader of the believers in this area. At the Anderson school house, on June 5, 1869, thirty-two Swedish Baptists united in organizing the first Swedish Baptist church in Wisconsin. It became known as the Trade Lake Church.[54]

The members were scattered over a wide area. On narrow trails through the tall timber many of these pioneers had to walk fifteen miles or more to get to the meeting place. John Ring, the first pastor, preached the gospel with great power and wept tears of love and sympathy for the lost. The first fall a revival broke out which proved one of the most sweeping and thorough-going that ever visited the Trade Lake community. One of the converts in this revival was the well known preacher and historian, L. J. Ahlstrom, then a boy of fifteen years of age. After the removal of John Ring to Minneapolis, N. J. Nylander was entrusted with the responsibility of preaching and conducting the services. Like the other settlers he toiled hard with his hands, often in some lumber camp, throughout the whole week. But on Sunday morning, he never failed to appear, wherever the meeting was held, to proclaim the story of salvation to his countrymen. It was a life of sacrifice to break spiritual ground on the frontier. O. Hake and E. Lundin, also farmer preachers, followed in the footsteps of Nylander, and did a noble work in building the kingdom of God in Trade Lake.

A salary for the pioneer preacher was, as a rule, never thought of.

---

[54] *Trade Lake History,* op. cit. p. 7. Ahlstrom, op. cit. pp. 96–104. In the *History of Swedish Baptists of Wisconsin* by O. Ellison the date of organization of the Trade Lake church is given as of September 1869. The facts in the matter, however, are as follows: The earliest minutes of the church bears the date November 6, 1869. But the same book which contains the minutes for the first three years also has a register of charter members entered on June 5 and 6, 1869. The record book of the Wood River church, organized a few weeks later testifies to the fact that the Trade Lake Church was organized in June 1869.

The people apparently were too poor for that. However, they were not entirely unmindful of those who labored in the gospel. Often it happened that O. Hake received a friendly visit from his appreciative neighbors who came to do the work on his farm. The women, too, would come, assuming the household responsibilities for the day. These occasions were real love feasts for the believers. The church constituted one happy family.[55]

The first baptism took place in Pine Lake by the Andrew Peterson home on July 4, 1870, when Andrew Ahlstrom was baptized. When they reached the shore after the sacred act of immersion, both the officiating preacher and the candidate fell on their knees and poured out their hearts to God in thanksgiving and prayer. The waters in the numerous lakes of this area were frequently disturbed by believers who followed the Lord in New Testament baptism, and the church experienced a healthy growth in number, spiritual power and influence in the community. At the seventy-fifth anniversary the membership was 171.

> The missionary spirit is revealed in the organization of the Wood River-Trade Lake Missionary Society, July 4, 1871. The society had forty acres of land known as "The Baptist Mission Forty" located just north of Little Trade Lake. The harvest from this "forty," as well as personal donations were used to send men such as John Ring, N. J. Nylander and L. J. Ahlstrom into neighboring settlements and sometimes to quite distant points to preach. This organization, no doubt, sowed the seed that later in 1890, grew into the Northwestern Missionary Society of which F. O. Carlson was for many years the faithful leader.[56]

The first church building was constructed in 1873. Previous to this the meetings were held in the homes or in the so-called Ring's Hall. The sanctuary was dedicated free of debt, and so thankful were the people that an offering was lifted for a struggling Baptist church in Nebraska. The present spacious and beautiful church building was erected in 1909.

Wood River

The pioneers of the Wood River district arrived about the same time as the Trade Lake settlers, and became charter members of that church. However, since the walking distance between the two places was well over ten miles, the Wood River Baptists soon felt the need of a church organization of their own. After two preliminary meetings,

[55] O. Ellison, *Svenska Baptisternas i Wisconsin Missionshistoria, 1902,* p. 17.
[56] *Trade Lake History,* op. cit., p. 9.

the church was formally constituted August 15, 1869, with fourteen charter members. All of these had been baptized in Västmanland, Sweden.

The early records, well preserved from the very beginning, evidence a good system and order in the small group. E. W. Erickson, commonly called "Preacher Erickson" to distinguish him from others by the same name, was chosen elder and minister. In this capacity he served the church about seven years. A committee was appointed to examine prospective members as to their conversion and faith. The third Sunday of each month at twelve o'clock was the time set aside for the celebration of the Lord's Supper. All members were given the privilege to see the records of the secretary and the treasurer at any time.[57] N. J. Nylander of Trade Lake, next to Ring the most talented of the pioneer preachers of Wisconsin, succeeded Erickson as pastor of the Wood River church in the winter of 1875. He was offered an annual salary of three hundred dollars, some to be paid in produce, some in clothes and the rest in money, depending upon what each member could do.[58]

The building of a house of worship by the Wood River church is a typical case of the foresight, sacrifice and missionary spirit that characterized the pioneers. Of special interest, also, is the fact that it was the first Swedish Baptist church building in the state of Wisconsin, as well as the first church built by any denomination in Burnett county. The minutes of the annual meeting January 5, 1870, record a motion to see if a house of prayer could not be built, where even preaching could be done. Decision was soon translated into action; for as early as January 10 the men went to the place selected to clear the ground. A small unpretentious building—the dimensions being 18x24 feet—was erected during the summer, and ready for dedication by Christmas. In fact, the house would not have been ready for service at that time save for a special act of sacrifice on the part of one of the leaders. They lacked planks for the floor. F. G. Jarl had secured planks in order to provide his own little home with a floor before Christmas. He gave them to the church—and to Christ! The small building, unusually well constructed, is still there and a part of the present and more commodius sanctuary built in 1894.[59]

The pioneers, in all their rugged individualism, were very attractive. They were God's noblemen. The following from Wood River is characteristic of many Swedish Baptists on the American frontier:

---

[57] *Seventy-Fifth Anniversary History of the Wood River Church, 1869–1944,* p. 3.

[58] Ibid., p. 3.

[59] Ibid. p. 4. Ahlstrom, *Vestra Wisconsin,* op. cit. pp. 130; 139–141.

> Carl Carlson[60] was a quiet and friendly man, always reliable and one who would never disappoint any one. He was vitally interested in all missionary work and was elected treasurer of the first mission society. Being gifted with a beautiful tenor voice, he loved to sing his Redeemer's praise. As he was nearing the great divide he was heard, but now in a feeble voice, singing, "Safe in the arms of Jesus." The last word had hardly died on his lips before he entered into his eternal rest. It is on his homestead land that the Wood River church was built. His wife was such a kind-hearted (hjärtesnäll) woman who seemed to understand that a boy was always hungry, and since my path led near to the Carlson home I used to drop in for a drink of water. However, the good woman always had something more to give. She knew how to win the heart of a hungry boy.[61]

Like the Scandia church of Minnesota, Wood River is prominent for her student pastors. Of the thirty different ministers who in the course of years have proclaimed the gospel here, the large majority have been student preachers. In this church they were granted the opportunity to exercise their gifts and to serve their Lord, and then to move on, many of them, to positions of greater responsibilities and opportunities.

★ ★ ★

The Swedish Baptist front had by 1870 been extended into eight states: Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, New York, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, and Wisconsin. It was a period of foundation laying and pioneering, of heroism and sacrifice, of defeats and victories. To spread the gospel light to their fellow countrymen everywhere was a consuming passion with the early preachers and churches. In the seventies and eighties there were to be two other factors which largely promoted the growth of Swedish Baptists: Edgren's Training School for Ministers and a rapid increase of immigration from Sweden.

---

[60] Carl Carlson was the father of the well known missionary-minded and young people-loving Swedish Baptist layman, Philip Carlson of Grantsburg.

[61] Ahlstrom, *Vestra Wisconsin,* op. cit., pp. 130–131.

CHAPTER NINE

EARLY PIONEER PREACHERS

In every sphere of human activity leadership is essential. The Christian church is no exception. In the light of this fact it is great wonder that the early Swedish Baptists survived. For in trained leadership, following the return to Sweden of the early pioneer preachers, they were extremely poor. The preachers, very few in number, were mostly farmers and naturally limited both as to time and ability. However, they were men of zeal and a deep religious experience. They had implicit faith in the great fundamentals of the Bible—that man without Christ was lost, but that God's grace was a sufficient remedy for all sin. This message they delivered, in their rugged way, both publicly and privately to their countrymen everywhere. And it pleased God to honor their labors. Souls were saved and churches established by the rugged pioneers.

NILS JOHAN RUNDQUIST

Except for the three founders, Rundquist was the first, in point of time, of a long line of Swedish American Baptist preachers. He was born September 6, 1811, in the parish of Dartorp, near the city of Hjo, Västergötland, Sweden. According to Palmquist, he belonged in Sweden to the "läsare" people, but of the kind that were steeped in self-righteousness.[1] His marriage proved unhappy, mainly because his wife was addicted to strong drink. For this and other reasons he was legally separated from her. After a tempestuous voyage of six months in a sailing vessel, Rundquist reached the shores of America in the summer of 1851. Andover, Illinois, became his first home. However, Moline was destined to be his earthly dwelling-place for some forty years. As in the case of Saul of Tarsus, his own righteousness according to the law left a void in his soul. Trustee though he was in the Lutheran church, he ventured out to hear Gustaf Palmquist preach, and as a result he soon came to a saving faith in Christ. About a year later, and after much searching of the Scriptures, he was immersed and united with the Swedish Baptist Church of Rock Island, October 2, 1853.[2]

---

[1] Westin, op. cit. 3:2, p. 102.

[2] Ibid., p. 102. Ahlstrom, *Swedish Baptists in Iowa,* p. 51.

From the very beginning of his Christian life Rundquist evidenced an interest in seeing others saved. At a meeting on April 21, 1854, he told the church that he believed God wanted him to preach the gospel and that he was willing to obey the divine call. Palmquist was authorized by the church to issue him a license, "advising him to hold meetings and visit the Swedes in the neighborhood, admonishing them to search the Word of God."[3] His gifts fitted him well for the mission of a colporteur, and in the early winter of 1854 he received his commission from the American Baptist Publication Society. After having received the benediction of his pastor and the assurance that the church had confidence in him, Rundquist started out to visit the Swedes in Illinois and Iowa, supplied with English and Swedish Bibles, religious books and tracts. The fruit of his labors soon proved that the confidence of his church in his ability and Christian integrity had not been misplaced. He was indeed a pioneer preacher who never hesitated at any sacrifice to bring Christ to the scattered settlers.

For seven years he continued his colportage work. In the early seventies he served as pastor of the Swedish Baptist church at Altona, Illinois, where his ministry resulted in the conversion of many souls. A meeting house was also erected. When the Moline church was organized in 1876 Rundquist became a charter member, was elected one of its trustees and served as a deacon from 1877 until his death August 5, 1892. His talents as a public speaker were average, surely not of the flashy type, but in kindness and Christian saintliness he had few equals.[4]

LAWRENCE LEONARD FRISK

Next to Wiberg, Frisk was the best trained preacher among the early Swedish Baptists. For he had an education equivalent to at least a junior college, and it is believed he might have attended the University of Uppsala for a short time. His father was a minister in the state church of Sweden, and an older brother attained some prominence as a dean in the same church.[5] Frisk was born at Hille near the city of Gävle, Sweden, September 11, 1828. Early in life he came under the influence of pietism and the "läsare" movement. The sensation created in Sweden by the banishment of F. O. Nilsson, the first Baptist preacher, caused the young student to search the New Testament in regard to its teachings of the church and baptism. This study led him to the conclusion that believers ought to be immersed. However, at that time, after Nilsson had been driven out of the country, there was no one in Sweden properly qualified, in his opinion, to perform the act of baptism.

---

[3] Ahlstrom, op. cit., p. 51.

[4] Ibid., pp. 52–53. Westin, op. cit., pp. 66, 79, 102, 121, 134, 158, 161. *Nya Wecko-Posten,* August 17, 1892, p. 5.

[5] J. Bystrom in *Wecko-Posten,* Stockholm, Jan. 10, 1939.

Frisk belonged to that group of religious radicals who could not remain satisfied with the religious intolerance of the Old World. He sought freedom for his soul on the shores of America. In the summer of 1853 he arrived in Brooklyn. Here he stayed a few months and found an opportunity to follow his Lord in baptism, which took place November 6, 1853, at the Strong Place Baptist Church of that city.[6] The same month, and apparently on the recommendation of Wiberg, Frisk was engaged as a colporteur among the Swedes by the American Baptist Publication Society in whose service Wiberg himself was engaged. Chicago, that fast growing city on the American frontier which was rapidly developing into a large Swedish center, became his first field of service. Here Frisk began his work in the middle of November 1853. In a letter to G. Palmquist on December 19, 1853, Wiberg expressed a fear that Frisk would not measure up to the standards of the Publication Society, for "he is too easy-going and shiftless and inclined to look mostly for a comfortable living."[7]

Perhaps the young Baptist preacher should not be blamed for getting discouraged; the Swedish colony of Chicago was indeed very stony soil for the cultivation of Baptist beliefs. However, the seed sown was destined to bear some fruit. By April 1854 it could be reported that there were eight Swedish Baptists in Chicago, including Frisk and his wife.[8] Four believers were immersed in the month of May, and five more in June.[9] In the fall of 1857 F. O. Nilsson visited Chicago and found thirty Swedish Baptists there. However, he complained that Frisk had caused trouble and the church was split.[10]

Like most early pioneers, Frisk was an itinerant pastor. He also served as pastor, or preached, in Galesburg, Moline, and Rock Island,

---

[6] Westin Letters, 3:2, op. cit., p. 82. This date and place for his baptism must be conclusive, as found in a letter from A. Wiberg to G. Palmquist of November 8, 1853. Cf. Ahlstrom, op. cit., p. 67, stating that Frisk was baptized in Sweden by Hejdenberg.

[7] Westin 3:2, op. cit., pp. 99–100.

[8] During a visit to Chicago by G. Palmquist in March 1854 he baptized Frisk's wife. Frisk was married when he came from Sweden. See Westin, 3:2, op. cit., pp. 68, 70, 97, 175. Of date Jan. 21, 1854, Wiberg writes to G. Palmquist about Frisk, "both he and his wife want to return to Sweden," Ibid., p. 109, 150.—Per contra, see Ahlstrom, op. cit., p. 67.

[9] Westin 3:2, op. cit. pp. 188, 201.

[10] Nilsson, *Diary,* October 4, 1857; June 23, 1859.

Illinois; Stromsburg and Holdrege, Nebraska; and Ishpeming, Michigan. In New Sweden, Iowa, he baptized thirty converts at one time. As a preacher his talents were of the evangelistic order. Furthermore, he was a linguist of note. Besides his studies in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, he was sufficiently conversant with German, French, and English to be able to preach in these tongues. Frisk passed to his reward February 19, 1906, at Rock Island, Illinois.

ANDREW NORELIUS

"Tragic" is the word that irresistibly comes to the mind of the historian as he reads the life story of Andrew Norelius. On May 31, 1854, at the age of twenty-four, he wrote from Moline, Illinois, a letter to A. Wiberg, which contained the following words of Christian victory and assurance: "He (Jesus) has loved me even to the death of the cross, and He has saved me. . . . No, I will never leave Him, I will rather suffer ridicule and persecution, even though it be from my own relatives. . . . I will never deny Him, no, not even if it is a question of life and death. He is mine and I am His. Yes, that is sure and true, true, true."[11] Sixty-nine years later the same man, the former pioneer preacher, then at the age of ninety-three, wrote another letter, closing it with these words, "I can say with LaPlace, I have no need of God."[12]

Norelius was born in Hassela parish, province of Helsingland, Sweden, July 1, 1830. At the age of twenty he emigrated with his brother Erik, who later became a prominent Lutheran preacher and historian, to the United States. After ten weeks in a sailing vessel on the Atlantic, during which time Andrew had a conversion experience, the two brothers landed in New York City, October 1, 1850.[13] Andrew soon came to Rock Island, Illinois, and the ways of the two brothers parted, as it seems, for life when Erik decided to prepare himself for the Lutheran ministry and Andrew threw in his lot with the despised Baptists. He was the sixth person to step into the Mississippi river at Rock Island to be immersed by Palmquist. This took place September 26, 1852.[14] Encouraged by his pastor, Norelius studied for a year, 1855–1856, at the Burlington Baptist College in order to prepare himself for the ministry. He was ordained June 29, 1856, and continued to preach for more than twenty years.

---

[11] Westin 3:2, op. cit., p. 191.

[12] Letter by A. Norelius to P. Lovene, June 13, 1923. Historical Collection at Bethel Seminary.

[13] Westin 3:2, op. cit. p. 103. Ahlstrom, op. cit., p. 136. *History of Stratford Baptist Church, Iowa,* p. 33.

[14] Rock Island *Record Book,* p. 4.

Most of the time his work was that of an itinerant pastor. He began his public ministry at Swede Bend (Stratford), Iowa, where he was the first pastor, August 1856–February 1857. Then he preached in New Sweden and Burlington, Iowa; Vasa, Cannon Falls, Spring Garden, Chisago Lake, Houston, and Isanti, Minnesota. Isanti became his longest charge, remaining there three years, 1865–1868. While here Norelius served as treasurer of Isanti county for two years, also as postmaster for some time. For several years he was supported by the Baptist Home Mission Society as missionary in Nebraska, Dakota Territory, Illinois, and Iowa. In September, 1864, Norelius enlisted in the United States Army and served as chaplain, preaching the gospel to the soldiers, until September 1865, when he received an honorable discharge. He served as secretary of the first Conference of Swedish Baptists, held at Rock Island, Illinois, June 20–25, 1856,[15] and was also present when the Minnesota Conference of Swedish Baptists was organized in Scandia, September 19, 1858.

From 1869 his home was at Kiron, Iowa, on an eighty acre farm. Here he was postmaster for many years. In 1879 doctrinal differences arose between Norelius and the Kiron church, which led to his exclusion. He remained outside of all church fellowship the rest of his life and without any active interest in Christianity. It is possible that with more tolerance and true Christian love on both sides this sad experience might have been prevented.[16] Having entered his ninety-eighth year, he passed away on April 10th, 1927, at Galva, Iowa, and was buried at Kiron on the fourteenth of April.

JOHN ANDERSON

In Minnesota there were three pioneer preachers, sometimes referred to as the three Johns: John Anderson, John Peterson, and John Erickson. Like most of the other early leaders, they were farmers, without a formal education, who secured their living by the toil of their hands. But they were men of zeal and did not count any sacrifice too great to bring the gospel of salvation to the scattered settlements of Swedes in Minnesota.

John Anderson was born in the province of Östergötland, Sweden,

---

[15] This conference preceded by one year the first conference of Baptists in Sweden. The original minutes in Norelius' handwriting are preserved in the historical archives at Bethel Theological Seminary.

[16] In *Evangelisk Tidskrift* for Sept., 1879, pp. 285–86, there is published a list of fifteen points in which Norelius attacked the teaching and practice of the church. *Nya Wecko-Posten* for June 20, 1911, p. 5, gives an account by C. J. Johnson of a conversation with Norelius relative to the same subject.

March 25, 1831. He arrived in America in 1852 and located in Burlington, Iowa. Here he was converted through the preaching of F. O. Nilsson and was immersed January 21, 1854. In search for land, he joined the little group of Burlington Baptists who set out for Minnesota in the spring of 1855, and who became the charter members of the Scandia church.

Here, under F. O. Nilsson, the young man was encouraged to use his talents in the preaching of the gospel. In 1862 John Anderson moved to Vasa in Goodhue County and began a pastorate that lasted sixteen years. This marked the high period of Swedish Baptist work in that part of the county. After two years at Eggleston of the same county he accepted a call to the First Church of Minneapolis where he ministered 1878–80. His next field of service was Leenthrop, Minnesota, which became his last charge. At the comparatively early age of fifty-six he received his home call November 14, 1887. Thirty years of faithful service for his Master!

John Anderson was an apostle of love, a wise leader of churches and a sympathetic counselor among his brethren. When preachers needed advice they usually turned to him, and when the young churches had perplexing problems to solve, his help was eagerly sought. In fact, the feeling prevailed that no council or conference was what it ought to be without his words of instruction and counsel. For many years he was the leading figure in the Minnesota conference and often served as moderator at the annual meetings. As a member of the Board of the Minnesota Baptist State Convention he was placed in a position where he could often secure aid for struggling churches. Twice, 1883 and 1884, he served as moderator of the General Conference. He was, indeed, a friend of God and a true friend of man, both young and old.[17]

JOHN ERICKSON

On his seventieth birthday some of his Minneapolis friends had invited John Erickson to A. G. Malmsten's home and presented him with a purse to enable him to secure an overcoat. In his letter of appreciation, published in Nya Wecko-Posten for March 25, 1885, he referred to his contemporary, the great Swedish Baptist leader Anders Wiberg, and he expressed himself in a way that makes it possible for us to see in this old pioneer a truly great and humble soul.

[17] *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Nov. 30, 1887, p. 4; July 27, 1898. *History First Swedish Baptist Church, Minneapolis, Minn., 1871–1921,* pp. 23–24. Hall, A. G., op. cit., pp. 49–50. Ryden, P., *Svenska Baptisternas i Minnesota Historia,* 1918, pp. 47–48.

> Different has our work (Wiberg's and mine) been on earth in that mine is so insignificant compared to his. However, as our salvation does not depend on our own merit but upon the atoning work of Christ and his eternally valid righteousness, I believe that even for me, unworthy as I am, there is prepared a place in the land of glory. Soon we old pilgrims, worn with much labor, shall meet over there and see Jesus face to face.[18]

At John Erickson's death his son-in-law, John Ongman, wrote: "Few men have lived a more consecrated life than did Erickson. He was a man to whom one could safely point as an irreproachable example of true godliness both in life and profession. Never did we hear him speak an unkind word of any man."[19] It was providential, indeed, that Swedish Baptists had men of such noble character in their pioneer ranks.

John Erickson hailed from the same province in Sweden as his friend John Anderson, namely Östergötland, where he was born January 30, 1815. Emigrating to the United States in 1852, he made his first home in Burlington, Iowa. In the revival that followed upon the preaching of F. O. Nilsson, he experienced God's saving grace, and was immersed the same day as was John Anderson, January 21, 1854. The following spring he moved to St. Paul, Minnesota, where he held some meetings for the Swedes, apparently without much visible results.[20] In 1857 he joined his Burlington friends who had migrated to Scandia. Here he was ordained to the gospel ministry October 20, 1859, and served as pastor at two different periods. For a number of years he preached at Lincoln, Minnesota, and also founded a church at Delano. Erickson was a typical lay preacher. His work resulted in many conversions, and the churches prospered under his ministry. After years of physical weakness and much suffering he ended his labors and entered into eternal rest November 5, 1889, at Lincoln, Minnesota.[21]

JOHN A. PETERSON

He was a man of rare gifts, being a preacher, poet, newspaper man, and legislator. Of him it was said that he bore the marks of sickness and suffering in his outward appearance, but that he had a pure and sanctified soul. Simple in manners, modest and unpretentious in character, kind and sympathetic of heart, he exerted a good and Christ-like influence upon all people.

---

[18] *Nya Wecko-Posten,* March 25, 1885, p. 4.

[19] *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Nov. 20, 1889, p. 2.

[20] John Erickson was the second Swedish Baptist to preach the gospel in St. Paul. F. O. Nilsson had spent the winter of 1854–55 there and found the place a spiritually stony ground.

[21] A. G. Hall, op. cit., p. 51. *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* 1883, p. 22. *Svenska Standaret,* Sept. 19, 1922.

John Augustus Peterson was born at Säby, Småland, Sweden, March 5, 1835. At the age of eighteen he emigrated to America and landed in Boston August 11, 1853. For three years he worked in a printing establishment at Rock Island. Having pursued studies for some time in a college at Burlington, Iowa, Peterson moved to Scandia, Minnesota, where he was ordained to the gospel ministry and served as pastor 1860–64. With a group of Scandia settlers he moved in 1866 to Lincoln, Blue Earth County. Here he was elected as representative to the State Legislature in 1873. The following year he served as pastor of the First Swedish Baptist Church of Minneapolis, from January until June, when on account of failing health, he was compelled to relinquish the pastoral care of the church. Even at that time he was affected with tuberculosis which a few years later ended his life. For some time he devoted himself to newspaper work and held the position of treasurer and associate editor of "Svenska Folkets Tidning," Minneapolis. To him also goes the honor of having published "Sions Basun," the first hymnal used by Swedish Baptists in the United States. Peterson fell asleep in Jesus on May 28, 1884.[22]

★ ★ ★

Rundquist, Frisk, Norelius, John Anderson, John Erickson, and John A. Peterson—these six. But the Lord had other servants also. Practically every local church had some faithful brother who was able to shepherd the flock and expound the Word. Thus we find Olof Peterson, commonly known as "Sailor Peterson," of New Sweden, Iowa; Alfred Johnson of Scandia; A. Granlund of Carver; Abraham Anderson of Houston, and Mathias Smith of Isanti. It seems likely, however, that only Palmquist, Frisk, and occasionally F. O. Nilsson gave all their time to the gospel ministry during this period.

---

[22] *Svenska Folkets Tidning,* Minneapolis, June 4, 1884. *Svenska Standaret,* Chicago, Sept. 25, 1934. *History of First Swedish Baptist Church, Minneapolis,* p. 21.

CHAPTER TEN

EARLY CONFERENCES

That a people who claim to base their faith and practice on the Bible, and the Bible only, should be progressive and missionary-minded is a reasonable conclusion. The early Swedish Baptists had taken their stand there, on the solid rock of God's Word. They were not afraid of religious enthusiasm, for it was the passion of their Master that compelled them constantly to press on to the next towns with the good news of salvation and it was His grace that made it possible for them to hear the Macedonian voice calling for help from distant shores. The Baptist principle of independence and democracy in church government has gone hand in hand with that other great New Testament principle of cooperation. A conference, and later on several, in which people come together, as is the meaning of the word, for the exchange of views and for consultation on a common work, thus became an early and important factor in the growth and development of Swedish Baptists on the American frontier.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

In trying to determine the purpose and objectives of early as well as later conferences there are at least three basic creative factors which should be borne in mind in order to understand their origin, existence, and continued success. First, there is the feeling of dependence, native in all human beings, and an essential element in all religion. This creates a need for social fellowship and united worship, centering in one common faith. The saints in every age, and Swedish Baptists are no exception, have realized their dependence not only upon God but also upon one another for a healthy and normal growth of their spiritual life. Secondly, there was the bond of a common race and nationality, a common language, and common customs and habits of life. Being strangers in a strange land, they realized all the more their need of that spiritual edification, comfort, and strength that comes from Christian fellowship. Finally, there was the missionary motive. The pioneers were soul-winners and anxious to win for the Lord their neighbors and friends as well as lost sinners everywhere. In order to do this effectively, cooperation of all the churches was necessary, and this cooperation naturally resulted in the formation of conferences and missionary societies. In reality a conference at its best is nothing but a missionary society in action.

THE FIRST SWEDISH BAPTIST CONFERENCE[1]

This was the first conference of Swedish Baptists in the world. For the conference of Baptists in Sweden was not organized until the following year. The meeting place was Rock Island, Illinois, and the time was June 20–25, 1856, hardly four years after the first church was founded there. Gustaf Palmquist was elected moderator and Andrew Norelius clerk. It was in reality a tri-state conference, Illinois, Iowa, and Minnesota being represented by seven delegates in all. So far these were the only states that had any organized Swedish Baptist work. An insignificant beginning indeed! But out of this has developed our General Conference with its far-reaching and many-sided work in missions, literature, and education, and our state conferences with their important missionary projects.

Going to the conference in those early days was quite an adventure. The difficulties of the journey made it a never to be forgotten experience of one's life. Frank Peterson who, as a young lad, accompanied his father to one of the early conferences gives us the following realistic account:

> The Mississippi River was then the main artery of travel in the Central West. The cabins of the steamboats were fairly good, but no delegate to our conference ever thought of such luxury as a cabin passage. He was content with the crude accommodations of the lower deck. On this deck there was not even a stool to sit on, much less a place to sleep. Such comfort had to be snatched anywhere, where there could be found a place on the cinder-covered floor, or perchance, on top of the piles of freight. In that case one was liable to be distributed by the deck-hands at every landing. The delegate furnished his own lunch, as the only food furnished the deck passenger was the smell of the odors from the kitchen. The delegates arrived at their destination a sorry lot. Not even as much as a wash basin, or soap, was furnished the deck passenger to aid in making his toilet. When the journey was made overland, it was usually by foot, or oxcart. The luxury of horses was not known until some years later.[2]

The pioneers did not have any lengthy and tiresome business sessions at their conferences. That was not their specialty. Strictly religious and theological problems absorbed most of their interest. These they could discuss for days, often with much heat, and always with profound conviction. The Bible was better known then than now and theology was always a timely subject for debate. Such questions as the relation of the law and the gospel, predestination, the trinity, and the second coming of Christ were matters which each thought it his duty to make clear to the other.[3] In fairness to our sturdy forefathers it should be stated, however, that it was not only theology and theoretical problems that occupied their attention. There was, in reality, a surprisingly balanced distribution of doctrinal and practical matters.

---

[1] The original minutes of most of the early conferences, 1856–1859, 1862–1869, 1870, 1872, 1878, are kept in the historical archives at Bethel Seminary.

[2] *Jubileumsboken,* op. cit., pp. 68–69.

At the Rock Island conference of 1856 thirty-two questions were introduced and discussed, covering the main doctrines of the Bible, preaching, pastoral duties, church discipline, etc. Interspersed with preaching, especially in the evenings, and much prayer, there was discussion which continued for five days. Here are some of the leading questions:

> What is the real ground for our salvation? Is salvation completed, or is it still in the future? What is meant by a carnal nature, and what will be the end of the carnally minded? Who is a right church member, and what are his duties to God, his fellow-men, and himself? Should a member be allowed to remain in the church when he is not causing any trouble but it is evident that he is not a believer? What is the obligation of the church toward Christian missions? What should be the fundamental object of a minister's work? What are a minister's greatest temptations? What attitude should a minister take in matters of controversy with believers and unbelievers? Should we preach all the truth even though believers may be antagonized? Should a preacher make house to house visitations? What should be his attitude toward other denominations?[4]

After the fourth day, when F. O. Nilsson arrived from Minnesota, the discussion became even more animated. For he was a man of a rather pronouncedly argumentative bend of mind. They all agreed that the pastor as preacher and leader was the most important factor in church work, and that the right solution to every problem would certainly be found if the pastor, in humility of heart, would constantly abide near the mercy seat to find practical wisdom and spiritual understanding. And who dare say but that the pioneers assembled at their first conference were right? They believed also that the carnal nature is enmity toward God and under His judgment. Nothing but death of the old man, and a new birth could make a Greek into a Christian and a sinner into a saint.

But the pioneers did not lose themselves in theological specula-

[3] *Life of Frank Peterson,* p. 20.

[4] Original Minutes of 1856, written by A. Norelius.

tions. They took time to listen to reports concerning the life and membership of the churches. The statistics are interesting and indicate a healthy spiritual growth in the few and scattered churches. Rock Island had 41 members; Chicago, 21;[5] Village Creek, Iowa, 41; New Sweden, Iowa, 15; Houston, Minnesota, 11; St. Paul, Minnesota, 6; Scandia, Minnesota, 25; Chisago Lake, Minnesota, 7; and New York City, 12. Thus there were nine churches, or groups—for we are not sure that St. Paul and New York had organized churches at that time—with a combined membership of 179. A motion was made to organize a Swedish Baptist conference, with annual meetings at a place to be decided on from time to time. The churches at Chicago, Rock Island, Village Creek, New Sweden, Houston, Scandia, and Chisago Lake became members of the conference.[6]

Like the Baptist people since times immemorial, our forefathers had the courage of their conviction to adopt a confession of faith. The objections to written statements of faith in some larger Baptist bodies of recent years is contrary to historic Baptist practice, and is a natural result of liberal and modernistic tendencies. The confession of faith adopted at the Rock Island conference of 1856 was one translated from the English by A. Wiberg.

The first official act of the new conference was a decision to ordain two of the brethren to the gospel ministry. Among Baptists this is ordinarily done by the local church, and in reality that is what happened here although in this case the conference took the initiative. A council was appointed, composed of G. Palmquist from Chicago, F. O. Nilsson from Minnesota, P. Nordell and Hokanson from Rock Island, and C. Carlson and A. Norelius from New Sweden, Iowa. Nilsson served as chairman of the council and Norelius as clerk. After the two candidates, A. G. Swedberg of Village Creek and N. J. Rundquist of Rock Island, had been carefully examined, it was recommended to the local church that they be ordained. The ordination took place the following day.

The first conference was characterized not only by a warm evangelical spirit and a keen religious interest but also by a beautiful and systematic order. The minutes are so well kept that they could hardly be improved upon in our day and age. The official name of the conference during the following six years was The Swedish Baptist Conference, popularly known as "the conference" (Konferensen).

---

[5] This was an earlier church in Chicago which ceased to exist after a few years. The present First Church, Addison Street, was founded in 1866.

[6] Original Minutes.

The annual meeting of the conference of 1857 was held at Village Creek, Iowa, June 18–20, with the same officers as the preceding year. Reports from the eight churches represented in the conference indicated an encouraging increase in membership, as follows: Rock Island, Illinois, 44; Chicago, 24; Scandia, Minnesota, 43; Chisago Lake, Minnesota, 21; New Sweden, Iowa, 15; Swede Bend (Stratford), Iowa, 25; Village Creek, Iowa, 43; and Houston, Minnesota, 15; a total of 232 members. Probably the most important event in that meeting of 1857 was the resignation of Gustaf Palmquist who was about to leave for Sweden to assist the brethren there. In behalf of the conference F. O. Nilsson made an impressive farewell speech to Palmquist. They must have felt their loss keenly, the little company of pioneers, as their founder and spiritual father, after five years of faithful and sacrificial work terminated his service in the New World and returned to his native soil.[7]

In 1858 the conference was held at New Sweden, Iowa. It was a poorly attended meeting. Chicago and Minnesota had no delegates. The absence of the wise leadership of Palmquist was apparent.

The following year, June 20–22, when the conference returned to Rock Island, with N. J. Rundquist as moderator and P. Nordell as secretary, conditions had improved somewhat. Several churches sent delegates, F. O. Nilsson coming from Minnesota and L. L. Frisk from Chicago. A new church of twenty-six members had been organized at Galesburg, Illinois, during that year, and an increase in membership was reported by most of the churches. Olof Peterson, the lay preacher at New Sweden, Iowa, was at that time ordained to the gospel ministry.

The minutes for the conference of 1860, also held at Rock Island, are missing. There is evidence, however, that the conference was held at said place and at the usual time. For instance, there is an old letter of June 18, 1860, from the New Sweden church, signed by Peter Carlson, and addressed to "the Conference of Baptist Brethren."[8] In addition, the third paragraph in the conference minutes of 1862 makes the statement that "the minutes of the conference held at Rock Island June 21, 1860, were read and approved."[9] Nothing is said in these minutes about 1861, and in the absence of any documents it is only natural to assume that, due to the unsettled conditions of the country in the early stages of the civil war, no conference was held that year.

---

[7] C. G. Lagergren, *Efter Sjuttio År, 1852–1922,* p. 37.

[8] This letter was found with the collection of Conference Minutes. See also F. O. Nilsson's Diary for June 20, 1860.

[9] Original Minutes. Lagergren, *Efter Sjuttio År,* p. 38.

Rock Island was the birthplace and for several years the most strategic center of Swedish Baptists of America. In 1862 the conference was again held there, July 4–5. An important change had now taken place in the minutes, indicating new developments in the organization of the conference. The earlier superscription of the minutes, "The Swedish Baptist Conference," is now replaced by "Minutes of the Conference of the Swedish Baptist Churches in Illinois and Iowa." The churches in Minnesota had dropped out and held a conference of their own in 1858. At the conference held at Village Creek, Iowa, June 18–20, 1863, with N. J. Rundquist as moderator and Nils Olson as secretary, a motion was passed that "the brethren in Minnesota be asked to return in order that a more aggressive work might be carried on by the conference."[10]

THE MINNESOTA CONFERENCE

From the account in preceding chapters it is evident that even in the very early years Swedish Baptist work began to gravitate toward Minnesota. The gospel followed the stream of Swedish immigration to the North Star State. Beginning in Houston in August of 1853, or probably at Chisago Lake in the spring of that year, the good work soon spread into many of the frontier settlements and the believers banded themselves together into churches of a New Testament pattern. By 1858 they were five in number, one church for each year since 1853, namely, Chisago Lake, Houston, Scandia, Wastedo, and Carver. Their combined membership in 1858 was 157.

When the Swedish Baptist Tri-State Conference met in Rock Island in 1856, Minnesota was represented by F. O. Nilsson. For a few years the Minnesota Baptists continued to send delegates to this conference. But it gradually became apparent that the distance was a prohibiting factor. The need, thus, of a somewhat more local organization caused the Minnesota brethren to consider the advisability of a conference of their own.

In his diary for Monday, September 20, 1858, F. O. Nilsson penned the following significant words which constitute the only meagre source available in regard to the origin of the Minnesota Conference:

"At nine o'clock in the morning we assembled in the meeting-house and held the first session of our conference. Outside brethren were present—A. Norelius from Wastedo, and Granlund, Ekbom and Mortenson from the Oscar (Carver) settlement. Several of the Scandia brethren were also present."

---

[10] Original Minutes. Lagergren, *Efter Sjuttio Ar,* p. 40.

Thus it is clear that only three—Wastedo, Carver and Scandia—of the five Minnesota churches were represented in these two days of meetings, September 20–21, 1858.[11] Furthermore, as is evident from the statement in Nilsson's diary, there were no officers elected nor any constitution drawn up. The meetings which lasted for two days were of a purely theological and inspirational nature (Uppbyggelsemöte). The two questions which were subject for discussion both days were the trinity and the election. It might not, therefore, be strictly historically correct to place the organization of the Minnesota Conference at this date, but rather observe that these meetings became a starting point which gave rise to an organized conference a few years later, just when, historians cannot determine with certainty since the sources are incomplete.[12] It is of interest to remember in this connection that the meetings held at Scandia, September 20–21, 1858, which gave origin to the Swedish Baptist Conference of Minnesota, antedate the American Baptist State Convention of Minnesota by one year. For it was organized in 1859.

THE ILLINOIS AND IOWA CONFERENCE

The conference that was organized in Rock Island 1856, as noted above, was general both in nature and scope. It was composed of all the seven Swedish Baptist churches then in existence, located in Illinois, Iowa, and Minnesota. And the intention, no doubt, of the founders was to continue and develop the conference along the same lines as a medium of fellowship of all Swedish Baptist churches in the whole country. After a few years, however, the brethren discovered that, due to the long distances between the churches and lack of good communications, this plan became increasingly difficult to realize. The smaller group, localized within a certain district or state, had more prospect of success.

The churches of Minnesota continued for some years, even after they had organized a conference of their own, to send visitors to the original conference, which, beginning with the conference of 1862, became known as "The Illinois and Iowa Conference." It had ceased as a general conference and henceforth functioned for the Illinois and Iowa churches only.

---

[11] Earlier Swedish Baptist historians state that the conference, represented by delegates from Houston, Scandia, Wastedo, and Chisago Lake, met and was organized Sept. 15–20, 1858.

[12] There are no records extant of the Minnesota Conference earlier than 1883. A collection of early minutes and other historical records were lost, or stolen, on a street car in Minneapolis. However, from the denominational press which was begun in 1871, the Baptist State Convention Annuals, and other sources, it is possible to piece together a fairly complete story of the early years of the Minnesota Conference.

The annual meeting of 1864, held at Village Creek, Iowa, June 16–18, became epochal and far-reaching in its results not only for the churches within Illinois and Iowa but also for the constitutional life of Swedish Baptists as a whole. A. Wiberg had made a second visit to America and spent the years 1863–1866 here. It was only natural to expect that he would call on the churches located on the western frontier. He arrived at Village Creek in time for the conference and was elected moderator of the meeting. One could almost discover that Wiberg was there even if his name had not appeared in the records. The minutes manifest a spirit of order—somewhat lacking in former years—that permeated this whole conference. A constitution was drawn up which very definitely indicates the presence of a real organizer. The subjects for discussion and the nature of the answers given to the questions that were raised reveal clearly the experienced teacher and the well trained and profound theologian. The proceedings were edited in a masterly way and for the first time were caused to be printed. These published records constitute, in reality, the first annual, or year book, of the Swedish Baptists of America. Besides the minutes, they contain the conference constitution that was adopted at this meeting, and a brief history of the origin and development of the churches, including those in Minnesota.[13] Pastor Wiberg was there! His presence made itself felt![14]

The delegates from the churches were L. L. Frisk, P. Nordell, C. Johnson and L. A. Palmquist from Rock Island, and A. G. Swedberg, A. Olson, E. Sandman, John Peterson and A. Ahlquist from Village Creek—nine in number. Visiting brethren from Minnesota were A. Norelius and four others.

The important business transaction at this meeting was, of course, the decision to organize a conference for Illinois and Iowa. Paragraph eight of the minutes reads as follows: "A motion was passed to organize a general conference of all Swedish Baptists in the northwestern part of America. However, as local difficulties made this impractical, it was decided to organize a conference for Illinois and Iowa."[15] A constitution committee, with Wiberg as chairman, was appointed and reported at a later session. It was the constitution prepared by this committee, most likely a work of Wiberg exclusively, and adopted by the assembled delegates, that made this conference a landmark in Swedish Baptist history. For it served as a basis and a model for all later conferences and missionary societies, and did much to direct the young churches into a channel of orderly missionary cooperation.

---

[13] The Constitution, in Wiberg's own handwriting, is one of the precious documents in the Historical collection at Bethel Seminary. See Original Minutes. Also, Lagergren, *Efter Sjuttio År*, pp. 39–40.

[14] A. G. Hall, *Svenska Baptisternas Historia,* Vol. 2, pp. 40–41.

[15] Minutes for the Conference of 1864. Hall, op. cit., p. 41.

The Illinois-Iowa Conference manifested from its very beginning considerable interest in home missions. At the annual meeting held at Altona, Illinois, in 1868, O. Lindh was elected missionary at a salary of six hundred dollars a year. In 1869, which was the first time the conference met in Chicago, two new missionaries, C. G. Johanson and N. E. Axling, were appointed. Axling took the place of Lindh who served only one year. The new settlements on the western frontier constituted the special field of the missionaries. At that time there were seven churches in Illinois and Iowa with an approximate membership of 500.[16]

At the annual meeting of 1871, held at Rock Island-Moline, June 8–10, there was present for the first time a man who was destined to exercise a greater influence upon Swedish Baptists of America than perhaps anyone else. It was Captain John Alexis Edgren, the founder of the seminary, who had recently arrived from Sweden to take charge of the church in Chicago. He was elected moderator of the conference and served with such a noble bearing and exquisite consideration that he earned the love and appreciation of all the delegates. The reporter for the conference, with apparent delight, gave a glowing account of the generous hospitality of the entertaining church:

> In vain do we try to tell of the sacrificial love and good times that the kind church of Rock Island-Moline showed us; for it was far above our highest expectations. Only one thing seemed to worry these friends, namely how they might get a sufficient number of guests and how they would find opportunity to entertain us in the most royal manner.[17]

The following year, 1872, a well attended conference was held at Village Creek, Iowa, June 6–10, at which an important change took place. The churches in western Iowa and Nebraska had requested that they might form a conference of their own, which request was granted, with the result that from that year, 1872, and for some years to come, there was an Illinois and Eastern Iowa Conference, and a Western Iowa and Nebraska Conference. Thus, with the Minnesota Conference, the original conference of 1856 had developed into three similar organizations. An interesting news item regarding these three conferences occurs in Evangelisten in the late summer of 1874.

---

[16] *Evangelisten,* 1869, pp. 28–31.

[17] *Evangelisten,* 1871, pp. 134–135.

> The Swedish Baptists of America have during the past summer held three conferences, where momentous questions have been discussed, such as the fanatical teachings of Seventh Day Adventism relative to a return to the Jewish Sabbath, concerning eternal punishment and annihilation of the wicked, etc. The Minnesota Conference, which now has 22 churches with 675 members, of whom 67 had been immersed during the past year, received five new churches into its fellowship.[18]

In June 1883 there was a further re-organization. The Iowa churches organized a conference separate from the Illinois-Eastern Iowa Conference and the Western Iowa-Nebraska Conference. The place of organization was Des Moines. The Nebraska Conference was also organized in June, 1883, at Oakland, Nebraska. The Illinois Conference about that time prepared a constitution and began to function as a separate state conference, as the conference in Minnesota had done since 1858.

When was the Illinois Conference organized? That was a question about which a very animated debate occurred in the denominational press during the summer of 1898. C. G. Lagergren claimed: "The conference organized in 1856 is the oldest one in America, and is today the Illinois Conference. Furthermore, since the Illinois Conference is a state conference, it is thus our oldest state conference."[19] To prove that proposition he points out that the original organization of 1856 persisted throughout the years, so that when the Minnesota churches separated, and likewise later on the Iowa churches, only the Illinois churches remained in the original conference. Whether historically correct, it is a fact that the Illinois Conference retained the original date of June, 1856.

On the other side of the question argued Eric Wingren, the editor of "Nya Wecko-Posten," O. Lindh and others, to the effect that "if the Illinois Conference is forty-two years old (in 1898), then also the Minnesota and the Iowa conferences are just as old, for all three have grown out of the conference of 1856."[20] This conference, as seen above, was a general, or tri-state, conference, and not the Illinois State Conference. Neither was the conference of 1864 a state conference of Illinois; it was the Illinois-Iowa Conference. Therefore, it seems quite evident that an unbiased historical investigation would come to the conclusion that the origin of an independent Illinois state conference cannot be traced farther back than 1883, leaving the Minnesota conference as the oldest state conference.

---

[18] *Evangelisten,* Stockholm, 1874, p. 171.

[19] C. G. Lagergren, *Our Conferences,* MS. See also *Nya Wecko-Posten,* July 13, 1898, p. 4.

[20] O. Lindh in *Nya Wecko-Posten,* July 13, 1898, p. 4.

PART TWO

THE ERA OF EXPANSION

CHAPTER ELEVEN

A THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

With the exception of Wiberg and Palmquist, as seen above, the early Swedish Baptist preachers during the first twenty years were all laymen and without any formal training for the ministry. Their libraries consisted of the Bible and a hymn book. Their sermons were rough and crude, strongly tinged with the great doctrines of Sin, Salvation, Grace, and Redemption. As was natural, revivals resulted from such preaching, and the believers were organized into churches on the American frontier.

However, the need for an educated ministry soon became apparent. On the one hand, the young churches needed constructive leadership based on a thorough knowledge of the Word of God, and on the other hand, it became necessary to exercise a constant watchcare against the inroads of many false teachings.[1] The Swedish Baptists, however, were exceedingly slow to respond to the need of educated preachers. In fact, it required the work of several decades to uproot a deep-seated prejudice against book-learning. The pioneers had left the homeland under religious persecution, which was instigated by an educated clergy. They had seen the corruption of the state church preachers in Sweden; they were tired of cold ritualism, with the long sermon that was read by the priest. To these frontier folk education meant corruption of living and deadness as to spirituality. Education was felt to be a hindrance to the working of the Holy Spirit in the lives of ministers.[2]

It was providential, however, that a few even in the days of early beginnings had a clear vision of the needs, and responded accordingly. The two or three men who had the benefit of formal training were confronted with a group of young and aspiring lay ministers who felt the need of an education in order to become more fully prepared to preach the gospel. The result was a training school for preachers, which, under

---

[1] J. A. Edgren, *Scrap Book,* Vol. 1, p. 21. The Scrap Book is a collection of clippings and personal notes preserved by Edgren. This, together with other scrap books, now preserved in the archives of the Swedish Baptist Historical Society, constitutes an exceedingly valuable source for the history of the Seminary.

[2] Emanuel Schmidt, *Svenska Baptisternas i Amerika Teologiska Seminarium,* 1871–1921, p. 11, Chicago, 1921.

God, became undoubtedly the most potent factor in the building and growth of Swedish Baptist churches in America.[3]

THE FOUNDING OF THE SEMINARY

In the summer of 1870 John Alexis Edgren arrived from Sweden to become the pastor of the First Swedish Baptist church of Chicago. His coming marked a new epoch in Swedish Baptist history. He was a chosen vessel to bring the gospel not only to those in Chicago, but to expand this work so as to reach the whole country as well as foreign lands. This he accomplished by means of founding of a theological seminary. Thus he writes: "Seeing all this, and feeling how great an advantage it would be for our missionaries and pastors to have a theological training for their general work, and knowing also the great need of preachers for our extensive fields, whitening for harvests, I was seized with a burning desire to impart to others what I myself had learned of theology, and more, too, provided I could get it."[4]

His original plan was to start the school in the basement of his church on the north side of Chicago. In the meanwhile, however, the Baptist Union Theological Seminary, located on the south side of Chicago, learned of his plan and invited him to organize his seminary as a department of that institution.[5]

Shortly before the disastrous Chicago fire, in the fall of 1871, an announcement appeared in Edgren's paper, "Zions Wäktare," which read as follows:

> *"A Theological Seminary"*
>
> for Swedes and others who understand the Swedish language and who intend to devote themselves to preaching, will be opened in the near future in Chicago. The school will undoubtedly be affiliated with the American Theological Seminary of this city and become a Swedish department of said institution, offering a complete course for such as desire to go directly into missionary work among the Scandinavians of the West, as well as providing a preparatory course for those who plan on continuing their studies at the American Seminary. To our countrymen who feel called of God to the gospel ministry we extend a hearty invitation to this school. The church in Chicago has promised to provide lodging for two students and board for one. If our churches at other places can do as much for the support of the students, they need no longer be without well prepared ministers. We be-

---

[3] Ibid., p. 12.

[4] Edgren, *Scrap Book,* Vol. I, p. 21.

[5] Ibid., p. 61. See also Eric Sandell, "En Historisk Återblick," *Minnesskrift,* 1914, p. 14. (a book prepared by the last graduating class at Morgan Park). And Adolf Olson, Educational Work of Swedish Baptists of America: Yearbook of Swedish Historical Society of America, 1926, p. 127.

lieve that this arrangement will be an answer to the prayer that many laborers might be sent out to the fields white unto harvest. J. A. Edgren.

In response to this call, one student, Christopher Silene,[6] made his way to Chicago to sit under the tutorship of this heroic man of faith. After New Year the second student, N. Hayland, arrived. A rather insignificant beginning indeed!

The inner nature and character of the seminary and the secret of its wholesome growth and success throughout the years were largely determined by the four principles which Edgren adopted at the very beginning of the new school.

1. Those who are to be admitted into the seminary should be conscious of a real conversion and a call of God to the gospel ministry.

2. The preacher should have as good an education as possible, but of all knowledge the most important is to know the Bible. Therefore, we take up such subjects in the school as will contribute to a true Bible knowledge, while the Bible itself, from beginning to end, is studied as thoroughly as time will permit.

3. To cultivate the mind is important for the preacher, but to cultivate the spiritual life is even more important. Thus, while storing the mind with useful information of a biblical as well as of a secular nature, spiritual edification must never be lost sight of.

4. The relation between teacher and students should not be that of superior and subordinate, but one of real friendship and helpfulness, remembering that One is our Master, and we are all brethren.[7]

THE FOUNDER, JOHN ALEXIS EDGREN[8]

John Alexis Edgren was born at Östanå, Älvsbacka, Värmland, Sweden, on February 20, 1839, the eldest child in a family of five brothers and three sisters. They were reared by loving and Christian parents. To use his own words: "My father was a man of prayer, often in communion with God. I shall never forget one night when I and my brother next of age slept in father's room. About midnight I awoke. I noticed that my father had arisen. He was on his knees at the bedside. Such a prayer as he was offering, such deep earnest pleading, interspersed with gratitude for answers already received, such evidence of habitual and real communion with God, I have hardly witnessed since. By the side of his bed were always to be seen at night a chair with the Bible, his watch, and a candlestick, and there his Bible lay that sad morning, when his lifeless body was found after he had passed away in the night, through a heart attack.[9]

---

[6] It is of interest to note that Silene's widow was still living and attended the 75th anniversary of the Seminary in June, 1946.

[7] J. A. Edgren, *Minnen från Havet, Kriget och Missionsfältet,* 1878, p. 109. *Scrap Book,* Vol. 1, p. 77. Olson, op. cit., pp. 129–130. Emanuel Schmidt, *Svenska Baptisternas i Amerika Teologiska Seminarium,* 1871–1921, Chicago, p. 19.

[8] For a complete account of Edgren's life see L. J. Ahlstrom, *A Biography of John Alexis Edgren,* Chicago, 1939. Also, Edgren, *Minnen,* op. cit. Edgren, *Fakta,* p. 1 f (this is an autobiographical sketch of great value); Adolf Olson and Virgil A. Olson. *Seventy-five Years,* A History of Bethel Theological Seminary, 1871–1946, pp. 12–14.

Young Edgren received a good education. A university student was his private tutor in the early years of his life. Later on he attended the "Elementarläroverk" in the city of Karlstad. Here he distinguished himself especially in languages and mathematics. However, the lure of the sea, which in former ages had such a strong appeal to the Scandinavian Vikings, fascinated the adventurous spirit of John Alexis. In 1852, at the age of thirteen, and with his parents' consent, he started out for the nearest port, and during the next few years Edgren sailed under five different flags, namely, English, Swedish, Norwegian, German and American. In the meanwhile, and especially in the winter time when sailing was not so good, he completed his education either at his home or in the Navigation School of Stockholm. At the age of sixteen he passed the examination for first mate, and in the spring of 1859, at the age of twenty, Edgren graduated as captain in the Swedish Merchant Marine, receiving the highest honors ever bestowed on a nautical graduate in Sweden.[10] In 1862 the ambitious youth returned to the Naval Academy of Stockholm and passed examinations qualifying him as instructor in navigation.

The all important crisis in Edgren's life occurred when he was eighteen years of age. It happened one stormy night in February, 1857, while his ship was waiting to sail from the harbor of New York. It was dark and dismal. The storm howled and the snow whirled. In the soul of the young sailor it was even darker. Impenetrable darkness, it seemed, surrounded him as he walked out on deck and fell on his knees in the snow to pray. As he prayed the light broke through when this passage of Scripture came to his mind, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."[11] He believed the promise and received assurance of God's mercy and love. Edgren had become a new man, a twice-born soul, and heaven's sunshine smiled on him.

---

[9] Ahlstrom, op. cit., pp. 11–12.

[10] Ahlstrom, op. cit. pp. 40–41. Edgren was then only twenty years old, and according to Swedish law too young to assume position as a captain.

[11] John 6:37.

A second momentous decision came about a year later. After a careful study of the New Testament, there was no doubt in his mind as to the next step, and on Thursday, April 29, 1858, John Alexis Edgren was immersed by Pastor Ira R. Stewart in the Mariners' Baptist Church, New York. After his baptism he made this statement: "My prayer has been answered; I have been led into a church whose principle it is to gather only believers into its membership, to edify each other and to work together for the conversion of the world."[12]

In a storm, while they were drifting along without a sail, they had given up all as lost. At that time Alexis had made God the promise that if He would save them from perishing in the gale, he would give his life to the gospel service. This became the third crossroad in his life. It pleased God to save his ship from destruction, and Edgren kept the promise which he had made in that hour of greatest distress. The Christian ministry was to be his life work. The opportunity to preach his first sermon came on Christmas Day, 1859, when the brig on which he was sailing had encountered a gale in mid-Atlantic. Edgren called the crew and the passengers together for a divine service. He chose as his theme, "The Lord's lamentation over Jerusalem," Matt. 23:37 (not a Christmas text). This marks the beginning of Edgren's career as a preacher. "On this voyage," he said, "I preached my first sermon," and adds, "Will there be any fruit of that sermon in the Day of the Lord?"[13]

After Alexis had returned to Sweden, and to Stockholm, his parents became much disappointed when rumors reached them that their son was preaching occasionally in the capital city. They were alarmed because he had become a Baptist, and feared that he would disgrace their name. He therefore decided to visit his home once more before leaving for America. John Alexis, at that time twenty-three years of age, was given an opportunity to hold a service in his parental home. The family, neighbors, and friends were all there, and many were in tears as they heard the young sailor expound God's way of salvation. When the meeting was over the father took his son by the hand and said with deep emotion, "If that is the way you preach, continue, my son, and God bless you."[14]

Back in America in 1862, in the midst of the Civil War, the Swedish sailor offered his service to the Union Navy. A younger brother, Hjalmar, was serving as an officer in the Union Army. Having passed his examinations as a naval officer he served in various capacities until the fall of 1863 when he resigned his commission. For a year Edgren attended the Princeton Theological Seminary. However, the following spring he reentered the Navy and served with distinction until the end of the war in 1865.

---

[12] Ahlstrom, op. cit., p. 38. See also *Minnen* and *Fakta.*

[13] Ahlstrom, op. cit., p. 42.

[14] **Ahlstrom op. cit., p. 47.**

Although pressure was brought to bear on him to remain in the Navy, with good prospects of promotion,[15] Edgren felt an inner constraint to devote his life to full time Christian service. The American Baptist Publication Society immediately engaged the young naval officer as a colporteur in New York City. In the fall of 1865 he enrolled as a student of theology in Hamilton Theological Seminary, Hamilton, N.Y. On April 10, 1866, he married Annie Abbot Chapman, in Hamilton, and on the following June 10 he was ordained to the gospel ministry at the Mariners' Baptist Church, New York City. Events now moved in rapid succession. Six days later Edgren, together with K. O. Broady and A. Wiberg, who had completed his second visit to America, left for Sweden, having been commissioned as missionaries to that country by the American Baptist Missionary Union. In Sweden Edgren joined Broady, Gustaf Palmquist, Anders Wiberg, and Adolf Drake in laying the foundation for the Bethel Seminary in Stockholm, which was to become the training school for the Baptist ministers of that country. In 1869 he accepted a call to become pastor of the Baptist Church at Uppsala, and in the early part of the following year he became associate with Truve in the Baptist church of Göteborg. Due to the frail health of his wife, he found it necessary to return to the United States in 1870.

Shortly after landing in New York Edgren accepted a call to the First Baptist Church in Chicago. It was here, in this rapidly growing metropolis of the great Middle West, that Edgren was to achieve his important life work. He led the church to success, he founded the seminary and started a denominational paper. His coming signaled a new epoch and the dawning of a new day for the Swedish Baptists of America.

Broken in health from overwork, he returned to Sweden in 1872 for a few months' rest. On his return he again plunged into the gigantic task of school work and literary labors. After fifteen years it became evident, however, that Edgren no longer could continue his work at the seminary. His frail body could not bear the strain. He retired to California and spent the last twenty years of his life in writing books, translating portions of the Bible from the original, and painting on canvas some of the outstanding events of his life. On January 26, 1908, at Oakland, California, he entered into his eternal reward.

---

[15] Edgren had captain's rank when he retired and was often referred to as Captain Edgren.

Edgren is known for an adventurous spirit, heroic faith, a love for hard work, great scholastic achievements, and for his obedience to his Captain, the Lord Jesus Christ. He was a Bible student of renown and well versed in practically all the Semitic and other related languages, such as Hebrew, Greek, Syriac, Egyptian, Coptic, Ethiopian, Armenian, Chaldean, Samaritan, Arabic, Assyrian, and Gothic. His son, Robert Edgren, stated that his father knew sixteen spoken and sixteen unspoken languages.

The following incident illustrates his scholastic ability:

> One day Edgren received a letter from some English scholars asking him to give them his interpretation of some recently discovered ancient inscriptions found on a monument in Egypt. After some time he received a complimentary letter from the Archbishop of Canterbury with the information that the scholars were convinced that Edgren's interpretation was the correct one and that this marked him as one of the foremost authorities on Egyptology.[16]

SACRIFICES AND VICTORIES

During the first six years the seminary was located on the south side of Chicago, at the Baptist Union Theological Seminary, a department of the old University of Chicago, which had its campus on Cottage Grove Avenue between 34th and 35th streets. In the fall of 1877 the Scandinavian department was moved to Morgan Park, about twelve miles south of the center of Chicago, where it was located for several years. According to the original announcement given by Edgren in his paper "Zions Wäktare," the seminary would be a school for Swedes. However, other Scandinavian students sought admission almost from the very first, and thus it was natural to invite the Danish and Norwegian students also. A Dane by the name of N. P. Jensen was later appointed assistant teacher in the school, and the seminary became known as Scandinavian.[17]

The way of the pioneer has never been an easy one. Edgren was in every sense a pioneer. Trials came to him both from within and from without. Because of his zeal for the institutions he wished to establish, he knew no end to hard labor. If one may judge from the amount of work he tried to do, Professor Edgren must have thought himself a physical giant. Besides having the pastoral care of the church, he issued our first denominational paper, "Zions Wäktare," taught the school, while at the same time taking courses in Hebrew and Greek in the seminary and reviewing higher mathematics in the University of Chicago. Broken health due to overwork was the result, and rest and strength were sought by a trip to Sweden.[18] This was in the spring of 1872. Upon his return in February, 1873, and not fully recovered, he found his family in direst distress and poverty. During his absence their young daughter had died and the mother had taken a position as a nurse to earn some money and alleviate her sorrow. In his diary Edgren wrote, "The situation appeared intolerable, but I had to bear it."[19]

---

[16] Ahlstrom, op. cit., p. 197.

[17] During the first year and a half there seems to have been no official connection between Edgren's school and the American seminary except that they shared the same building. After Edgren had carried on for a year and a half he was appointed an instructor by the seminary. He was responsible, however, for his own support for several years.

To resume the work in the seminary under such conditions, being responsible for his own support, required a faith in God and a self-denial that few would have been prepared for. To look for any material aid from the Swedish churches at that time was out of the question, since they were few in number, and practically all of them were very poor. Besides, as we have indicated, there was a lurking prejudice against an educated ministry, which caused many to look upon the undertaking with suspicion, rather than to encourage it with a cheering Godspeed.[20]

As stated above, Edgren had no guaranteed salary during the first seven years, and consequently he and his family were often brought to the lowest point of physical privation. In a miraculous way, as it seems, and in answer to prayer, the school was kept alive. In the summer of 1873 a man of means, Captain Wilson of Menominee, Wisconsin, was prevailed upon to promise four hundred dollars a year for two years toward the support of the Swedish Seminary, provided the Swedish churches would contribute substantially for the same work.[21] But the churches failed in their support, and after two years Captain Wilson stopped his contributions. Due to those conditions it appeared absolutely necessary to close the seminary.

---

[18] Frank Peterson, *Historic Record.* The Central Bible Seminary, Stromsburg, Neb., 1886, p. 6. See also Eric Sandell, *Minnesskrift,* Chicago, 1914, p. 17; Adolf Olson, *Educational Work Among the Swedish Baptists of America. Yearbook* of the Swedish Historical Society of America 1926. Vol. XI., p. 128; Adolf Olson and Virgil A. Olson, *A History of Bethel Theological Seminary,* 1871–1946. Chicago p. 17 f.; E. Schmidt *Svenska Baptisternas i America Teologiska Seminarium,* 1871–1921.

[19] *Scrap Book* Vol. 1, p. 2, Ahlstrom, op. cit. p. 88. Olson, op. cit. p. 128.

[20] Frank Peterson, op. cit., p. 10.

[21] Edgren, *Fakta,* p. 9.

In September, 1875, Professor T. J. Morgan, an intimate friend of Edgren, made an appeal in "The Standard" to the American Baptists to come to the rescue of Edgren. "Something must be done at once," he says, "to save the Scandinavian Department, from destruction." Having explained the value of this department to Baptist work in America, and how Edgren, because of his character, learning, and ability to teach, deserved their support, he added:

> "The Board of The Theological Seminary have never assumed the support of this department, and under the pressure of the times do not feel authorized or able to do so. Professor Edgren believes that God has called him to do this work, and he clings to it with most heroic faith. But he has now used up every dollar of his means, has absolutely nothing left, and unless help comes at once, must, to avoid starvation, abandon the work. Shall he be forced to do this? It should not be done without this full statement of the facts to the denomination, and an appeal to them not to sacrifice this great interest for the lack of a few hundred dollars. Will it not be a sin against God, and a shame to us as a people, to abandon this work now?"[22]

The appeal was heeded, and help came. One Mr. Cooley gave a calf, which yielded forty dollars. The State Conferences of the Swedish Baptists in Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, Nebraska, and Dakota decided that year, 1875, to recommend to the churches that they remember the school in their contributions.

However, at the beginning of the school year 1876–1877, the financial situation had become even more desperate. Captain Wilson had refused to give his four hundred dollars that year. Edgren had toured the eastern states in the hope of receiving aid for the school. But it was of no avail. The courage of the heroic founder almost failed him, and he seriously considered giving up the apparently impossible toil in the seminary to again seek employment on the sea.[23]

With the few remaining dollars in his possession, he bought a ticket for Galesburg, Illinois, in the hope of addressing the local Swedish Baptist church and receiving an offering for the school. On his arrival he discovered however, that a lady missionary had just occupied the pulpit and received a goodly sum of money. With an anxious spirit Edgren retired to his room to spend the entire night in prayer. Early the following morning on the Lord's Day, C. Silene, who was then the pastor at Galesburg, brought a telegram to his former teacher. The telegram was from Doctor Goodspeed, the Secretary of the Baptist Union Theological Seminary, and read as follows: "Just returned.

---

[22] *Scrap Book,* Vol. I, pp. 19, 77; Schmidt, op. cit. p. 21; Olson, op. cit., p. 18.
[23] *Scrap Book,* Vol. I, p. 77.

Captain Wilson will do same as last year." With this telegram came the promise of four hundred dollars for the school year 1876–1877. God had not failed. The telegram became a signal from heaven to continue with the school work. On the back of this telegram Edgren wrote:

Hold the fort, for I am coming,
Jesus signals still.
Wave the answer back to heaven,
By thy grace we will.[24]

It has often been said that the greatest blessings in life have come in the way of suffering. This was abundantly verified in the case of Edgren and the seminary. In ever increasing numbers students of Edgren's school went out and proclaimed the gospel of redeeming grace with great results. Souls were saved and churches organized. Besides Hayland and Silene, who will always stand as first fruits of Edgren's educational labors, there were N. P. Jensen, who became the greatest educator among the Danish Baptists, John Ongman, the aggressive missionary pioneer in both America and Sweden, and Niels Tychson, organizer of the Daneville Church and well known throughout the Dakotas as one of the most influential members of the Constitutional Convention of the Dakota Territory.[25]

After ten years the student body had grown from two students to eighteen in 1881–1882, twenty-eight in 1882–1883, and thirty-two in 1883–1884. These students represented all of the Scandinavian nationalities, coming from many different states in the Union. Foremost in this group stood Eric Sandell who was destined to become one of the great future educators of the Swedish Baptists.[26] At the closing exercises of the seminary, held at the First Swedish Baptist Church of Chicago, April 14, 1884, the report showed that 89 students, including two women, had attended the school, 63 being Swedes, 17 Danes, and 9 Norwegians. Through the ministry of these students, while on the field of service, 2,000 baptized converts are recorded, while 55 churches had been organized, 25 Sunday schools started, and 24 church edifices had been erected with an aggregate value of $50,000.[27]

---

[24] *Scrap Book,* Vol. I, pp. 30, 61, 77. Edgren, *Recollections,* p. 69. This telegram is preserved in the Historical archives at Bethel Theological Seminary.

[25] Ahlstrom, op. cit. pp. 89–90. *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* 1879, p. 183. This is a religious monthly published by Edgren, 1877–1884, and contains much valuable material for Swedish Baptist History.

[26] *Scrap Book,* Vol. I, p. 77. Ahlstrom, op. cit., p. 99.

[27] Edgren, *Fakta,* op. cit., pp. 5–6. Peterson, op. cit., p. 10; *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* 1884, p. 153.

THE SEMINARY MIGRATION

The years 1884–1888 became a period of migration in the history of the seminary. It moved three times: from Morgan Park, Illinois, to St. Paul, Minnesota, thence to Stromsburg, Nebraska, and finally back to Morgan Park, where it remained for twenty-six years. As early as 1881 it had been contemplated to sever the connection with the Baptist Union Theological Seminary and establish an independent school for the Swedish Baptists to provide theological education as well as education of a more general type. At the General Conference of the Swedish Baptists held at Council Bluffs, Iowa, in September, 1881, Professor J. A. Edgren was called by that body to open a theological school to be located in Minneapolis, Minnesota. His resignation was sent to the board of the Baptist Union Theological Seminary, and the new call was accepted. Preparations were being made for an early opening of the school, when an earnest appeal from the Seminary in Morgan Park and from the Chicago ministers was made to Edgren, asking him to withdraw his resignation. Many of the annoying matters of principle and practice were cleared up, a living salary was promised the Swedish professor, and an assistant teacher, N. P. Jensen, was appointed.

It should be borne in mind that during the first seven years with the seminary Edgren was responsible for raising his own income. After that, the Baptist Union Theological Seminary gradually assumed the responsibility of his salary so that Edgren could devote himself to teaching and other promotional activities. The salary, however, was very inadequate and much smaller than that of his American colleagues in the seminary. This situation continued for several years until Edgren protested to the school board about this inequity, for which he received a sharp rebuke. This seemed unfair to the Swedish professor because the school seemingly profited from Edgren's department which was being advertised as a missionary project and its wonderful progress was being stressed. Finally, after much consideration and out of love and respect for Doctor Morgan, his beloved colleague who defended him on several occasions, Edgren consented to remain.[28]

This, however, did not prove to be the solution of some tense internal difficulties in the seminary, nor a satisfaction to that growing desire among Swedish Baptists, as well as with Edgren himself, to have an independent school, entirely separated from the American seminary. Existing merely as a department of a larger school, there was not much prospect for the Swedish seminary to attain a growth commensurate with the needs of the denomination. Fortunate as it had been for the Swedish Baptists to lean upon their stronger American brethren in regard to their educational work, this dependency unquestionably had been an obstacle to true progress.[29]

---

[28] Edgren, *Fakta,* pp. 9, 10, 12, 14. *Scrap Book,* Vol. I, p. 55. Olson, op. cit., pp. 25–26.

Reasons of a more personal nature too, made it seem expedient to leave Morgan Park. Edgren had expressed himself in no uncertain terms against the increasing practice among American Baptists, including many of their ministers and leaders, to belong to the Free Masons and other secret orders. The anger of many of the American Baptists was aroused against him, but, unwilling to face the real issue, they accused Edgren of being un-American and unorthodox.

In the course of this disagreeable controversy, G. W. Northrup, president of the Baptist Union Theological Seminary, even hinted at Edgren's removal from office, if he dared publish the manuscript "Epiphaneia," a book in which Edgren advocates the premillennial view in eschatology. Called upon to defend himself, Edgren stated:

> True, I do not see how Christians can be members of secret societies, in which a Christless religion is practised. True, I believe in the premillenarian coming of Christ, but I am no extremist, as my book "Epiphaneia" will show, but I trust I am thoroughly scriptural, with due acknowledgment of difficulties. The statement of my "un-American" spirit and aims is false. I have risked my life for America in the late war, and I have given the best of my strength for the religious advancement of a part of her population; but I have grieved over unexpected worldly, and in my regard, unchristian tendencies here and there in the churches. I have loved the good in America, but not the bad, and this, I judge, is rather American than un-American.[30]

Edgren's reasons for leaving Morgan Park to establish an independent seminary were as follows: First, the Swedish department in the American seminary had been extended to its capacity and there was not much further room for development of teaching and curriculum; second, it was desired to have the school farther west in the heart of the Scandinavian work, and more easily accessible to the growing missionary needs; third, an independent school could pursue with more diligence the courses especially needed, and above all, a Bible-centered curriculum; and finally, all of the churches would be helped not only spiritually but also intellectually, and then, of course, they would have the privilege of supporting a school they could call their own.[31]

---

[29] Olson, *Educational Work of Swedish Baptists,* pp. 132–133.

[30] *Scrap Book,* Vol. I, p. 83. *Fakta,* p. 21. Ahlstrom, op. cit., pp. 120–126.

[31] Edgren, *Fakta,* pp. 18, 30–32.

In the spring of 1884 Edgren made a lecture tour through the western states to ascertain whether the time was ripe for the establishment of an independent institution. The people were enthusiastic about the project, and consequently a meeting of prominent denominational leaders was convened at Omaha to take the matter under thorough consideration. All were unanimous that the time had come when the Swedish Baptists in this country needed and must have a theological seminary of their own if they were to develop as they ought to, and to keep pace in their missionary labors with other Swedish denominations in this country. Professor Edgren sent in his resignation to the board of the seminary at Morgan Park, July 14, 1884. The Rubicon was now crossed, and there was nothing to do but to make immediate preparation for the establishment of another school which must be opened within the next three months. But where the school was to be located and from whence the necessary funds were to come nobody knew. If ever anything seemed visionary, this certainly did, and when the incorporation papers were made out, there was not money enough in the treasury to pay for their recording.[32]

To the general public, however, the announcement of the new seminary came as a sudden surprise. Edgren published the announcement August 13 of the same year in the "Evangelisk Tidskrift:"

> The Swedish American Bible Seminary organized in St. Paul, July 30. Preparations for the opening have been made. We shall begin by offering the usual Bible and theological courses, and plan, as soon as possible, to conduct classes in academic subjects. Those desiring to preach or do evangelistic work should write to the undersigned after the middle of August, so that room, etc., can be secured in due time. J. A. Edgren.[33]

Minnesota was already a promising field for Swedish Baptist work, and since St. Paul was the first to respond with an offer of eleven acres of land, it was agreed that the reorganized school should be moved to that place. Under the name of "The Swedish American Bible Seminary" it was opened on October 1, 1884, in the First Swedish Baptist Church, corner of Burr and Collins streets, where temporary quarters had been prepared. Forty students were enrolled, arranged in three classes which constituted the regular course, besides one special and one post-graduate course. The faculty consisted of J. A. Edgren, president, teaching Biblical subjects and Hebrew; N. N. Morten, who taught English, Swedish, and Greek; O. Sohlberg, Swedish; John Ongman, Pastoral

---

[32] Frank Peterson, op. cit. p. 12. Edgren, *Fakta,* p. 20.

[33] Edgren, *Scrap Book,* Vol. I, p. 81.

Duties; Frank Peterson, Physical Geography; Julia Edgren, History and Music; and A. B. Orgren, Music. At the commencement, April 14, 1885, there were five graduates from the regular course and one from the post-graduate course.[34]

The seminary was managed according to the same principles as had been followed in Morgan Park, and, in the near future, an academy and a college were to be added. This is characteristic of Edgren's farsightedness. Unquestionably if the school had remained in St. Paul at that time as an independent Swedish Baptist institution, it would have developed within a few years so as to include not only a seminary but also an academy and a four year college course.[35]

The Swedish Baptists of the Northwest manifested great interest in the school. Money, as well as gifts "in natura," poured in for the kitchen, the dormitory, and the running expenses for the school; subscriptions toward an endowment fund were received, amounting to about $30,000, and the first year closed without a dollar's indebtedness.

> A wonderful showing indeed. If ever the hand of God was stretched forth to prosper His kingdom, it was done in this instance. It shall ever remain as a bright page in the history of this seminary, that its first term under its independence, which commenced without a dollar's worth of visible means, shall stand forth before coming generations as a testimony of what a handful of people with faith in God can do when the cause they espouse is the cause of God.[36]

Although the seminary had prospered in such an outstanding manner in St. Paul, yet there was still uncertainty in the minds of some of the leaders as to the permanent location of the school. It remained only one year at St. Paul, and after two years more it returned to the former dependency upon the American Baptists. A generous offer from the citizens of Stromsburg, Nebraska, consisting of $10,000 from the city of Stromsburg toward a building, and forty acres of land from one John Ekely, if the school were removed to that place, became too strong a temptation. Edgren himself seemed to believe that the place for the school was St. Paul. But he permitted himself to be persuaded by the financial secretary, A. B. Orgren, as well as by other leaders, to move to Nebraska. Thus the offer was accepted, and the following winter, February 27, 1886, the first building of "The Central Bible Seminary," as the school was now called, was dedicated unto service.[37]

---

[34] Ahlstrom, op. cit. p. 140; Peterson op. cit., p. 13.

[35] *Scrap Book,* Vol. I, p. 81.

[36] Peterson, op. cit., p. 14. *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Feb. 18, 1885, p. 4, and March 25, 1885, p. 4.

[37] *Scrap Book,* Vol. I, p. 95; Ahlstrom, op. cit. p. 141.

In case the school should discontinue its activities within ten years, the building and five acres of the land would revert to the city of Stromsburg, provided the institution by that time did not have another building of equal value with the first one, in which case the property would continue to belong to the Bible Seminary. Suffice it to say that after two years, or in the fall of 1888, the Seminary returned to Morgan Park and was reunited with the Baptist Union Theological Seminary. The denomination lost a splendid property, which returned to the city of Stromsburg. Evidently the times were not ripe for the establishment of a high school department and a college, and foresight and good leadership were lacking. Had the departments been established, the seminary could have moved and the property still been kept intact. No adequate reason has ever been given for moving the school, although it has been stated that Stromsburg was located too far away from the main centers of Swedish population.

While in Stromsburg, in the spring of 1887, Edgren's health broke down, and his physician advised an immediate change of climate. He moved to California, and was never able to return to the work he had founded, the work he loved more than his own life, and for which, in unstinted measure, he had sacrificed the best of his manhood. Here he lived the last twenty years of his life, more or less forgotten by the people he had served. When he realized that he was never to recover his health, he sent in his resignation, in August, 1887, with the recommendation that the school call Eric Sandell to succeed him.[38] Sandell, then pastor of the Second Swedish Baptist Church, Chicago, was asked to come and lead the affairs of the school, which call he accepted and acted as dean of the Seminary until the end of the Stromsburg period in the summer of 1888. At that time the school was returned to Morgan Park, Chicago, and entered upon a new period of development, the story of which will be told in a later chapter.

---

[38] Ahlstrom, op. cit., 146; Sandell, op. cit., p. 22.

CHAPTER TWELVE

A DENOMINATIONAL PRESS

IT HAS often been said that Christianity is not a book-religion but a life-religion. The Bible does not give us Christ, but Christ gives us the Bible. For our knowledge of Christ, however, we are wholly dependent upon the Scriptures. In giving his revelation to the world, God has followed his ordinary method of communicating and preserving truth by means of written documents. Without these written documents, without the sacred Scriptures, it is doubtful whether Christianity could have survived. The Christ we know is the Christ of the Book. The salvation we have experienced is the salvation presented in the Book. And the eternal hope promised to the believer is the hope set forth in the Bible.

In the spread of the gospel it has pleased God to use not only the sacred Scriptures but other literature as well. Christian hymns, books of a doctrinal and a devotional character, missionary information, have been a powerful factor in the planting of the cross in every land. Moreover, distinctly so-called denominational literature has always been one of the two foremost creative forces in the life and progress of a denomination. The other force is the training school for preachers.

What applies to Christianity in general in this respect is true of Swedish Baptists. For they, too, have been very intimately dependent, in the spread of the gospel and in the upbuilding of churches, upon the written and printed word and upon denominational literature. Anders Wiberg, became a pioneer in this field also. Both by natural endowment and by reason of an excellent training he was eminently qualified as an author. The year before he became a Baptist he purposed to write a book in defense of infant sprinkling. However, in his searching of the New Testament for support of his thesis he met with disappointment. Not a word in favor of infant sprinkling could be found. The result of the matter was that Wiberg wrote a book, "What is Baptism, and Who Should be Baptized?" in which he expounded believers' immersion as the only New Testament baptism. The book was published in 1852, shortly before his first visit to America, and it became epochal in Swedish Baptist history. A real masterpiece it was, laying the foundation deep and strong for Baptist faith and practice. It is doubtful if anything has ever been written on New Testament baptism in any language that surpasses this work from Wiberg's pen. Later, during his three years' stay in America as well as after his return to Sweden, throughout his long life he was ceaselessly active in writing books, pamphlets, tracts, and periodical literature in defense of the faith as Baptists understood it and in the upbuilding of the life of the saints.

In 1856, the year after his return from America, Wiberg began the publication of "Evangelisten," a monthly periodical of a high literary and theological order. For the early Swedish Baptists of America, and primarily for the Baptists of Sweden, this paper became a Bible and missionary training school, and a bond of spiritual connection between the scattered churches throughout the country.

BEGINNING OF A DENOMINATIONAL PAPER

Apparently the first effort at periodical literature by Swedish Baptists in America was made in Galesburg, Illinois. The Baptists who were under constant attack in the Lutheran paper "Hemlandet," felt keenly the need of an organ in which they could defend themselves and their faith. In 1859 some aggressive men in the Galesburg church formed a corporation, elected Carl Arosenius editor and published a paper named "Frihetsvännen" (The Friend of Liberty). It was short lived, however, and ceased publication after a year or two.[1]

John Alexis Edgren, however, was destined to become the real founder of a Swedish Baptist denominational press in America, just as he launched the training school for preachers. His coming marked an era in Swedish Baptist history. Following his arrival in Chicago[2] in the summer of 1870, Edgren with his keen spiritual and practical sense, soon realized the need of some literary bond of fellowship and communication between the scattered churches. And he was the only man who could assume such responsibility; for there was no one else among the preachers who had received a theological and literary training. A serious responsibility it was, indeed, especially in view of the limited constituency among whom Edgren was working. The Swedish Baptist denomination at that time numbered less than 1,500 members.[3]

---

[1] Eric Johnson and C. F. Peterson, *Svenskarne i Illinois,* Chicago, 1880, p. 143. According to Olof Lindh in his *"Minnen,"* pp. 76–71, the name of the paper was *"Evangelisten,"* like Wiberg's paper in Sweden, and the editor was one Cronsjo. Since Lindh visited Galesburg as early as 1869, and reorganized the church there, it is probable that his statement is correct. Ernest W. Olson in *History of Swedes in Illinois,* p. 550, states that there were two papers published, the first one "Frihetsvännen" and the second one "Evangelisten."

[2] See Ch. Seven.

But Edgren did not hestitate, and in the month of May, 1871, he began the publication of "Zions Wäktare"[4] (The Watchman of Zion). It was a monthly magazine. The career of this periodical did not last more than a few months. In common with many other undertakings, it was buried in ashes in the great Chicago fire of October, 1871.

This forerunner of Swedish Baptist papers was a four page publication of about the same format as the present Standard. Directly under the name "Zions Wäktare" there is a statement from the Bible, "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth," Isa. 62:1. The front page in the August number of 1871 contains a brief sermon by Spurgeon on "How to Carry the Shield of Faith," a psalm by Esaias Tegner, a missionary story, and a brief statement by Whitefield about Wesley. The second page carries a scholarly and profound article by Edgren on "The Bible as Divine Revelation." The third page has an interesting account of missions in Europe: Germany, France, Spain, Italy and Greece; Asia: Burma, Assam, India and China; Africa; and home missions, with letters from Minnesota and Chicago. The last page, which is in English, is devoted to a "Children's Department." It is evident, even to a casual reader, that Edgren's paper both in content and form, both in literary style and subject arrangement, possessed most excellent qualities. It ranked among the best ever produced by Swedish journalism in America.

The Chicago fire terminated "Zions Wäktare," but Edgren was not the kind of man who would give up easily. In the month of May, 1874, he started his second paper, the name now being changed to "Zions Wakt"[5] (The Watch of Zion). Like its predecessor, this paper also was a monthly, and in form and content similar to the former periodical. In 1875 Edgren transferred the editorial responsibility to K. A. Ostergren, who changed the name to "Facklan" (The Torch), which went out, however, during the depression of 1877[6]

But Edgren, the courageous trail-blazer, realized the absolute need of a denominational journal. In November, 1877, he began the publication of his third periodical, "Evangelisk Tidskrift" (Evangelical

---

[3] J. O. Backlund, *Swedish Baptists in America,* Chicago, 1933, p. 94.

[4] Only one copy, number 4, for August 1871, is in the possession of the Swedish Baptist Historical Society.

[5] *Zions Wakt,* 1874–1876, preserved nearly complete in the historical archives.

[6] Backlund, *Swedish Baptists in America* p. 94.

Journal). To begin with, this too, was a monthly. When Eric Wingren arrived from Sweden in 1880 to assist Edgren in his various labors, he assumed the responsibility for publishing "Evangelisk Tidskrift." Under his hand the monthly was soon developed into a bi-weekly, and later, in 1885, into a weekly paper under a new name, "Nya Wecko-Posten" (The New Weekly Mail), which was known and beloved for a third of a century wherever Swedish Baptists might dwell.[7]

ERIC WINGREN

He belonged to both Sweden and America. In Sweden he was born and grew up to manhood, and there he was converted and preached the gospel for about fifteen years. But it was in America that the major portion of his life work was done. As teacher, pastor, and especially as journalist he influenced for a generation the religious faith and practice of Swedish Baptists to a greater extent than any other man. Almost with the authority of an oracle he continued to speak to his fellow believers through his paper every week from 1880 to 1918, when illness forced him to retire.

Eric Wingren was born at Stugun, Jämtland, Sweden, December 17, 1843. The province of Jämtland, which has given to the Swedish Baptist movement a number of great leaders, was at that time blessed with great spiritual revivals, under the influence of which young Wingren was brought to Christ, at the age of sixteen. His conversion, like his whole life and teaching, was of the profound and thorough type. In a brief autobiography he relates that remarkable experience as follows:

> As I was pacing the floor in the semi-dark room, lighted only from the smoldering embers in the open fireplace, I was suddenly surrounded by a bright light. I saw the Lord Jesus, hanging on the cross, bruised and bleeding, as He gave his life a ransom and atonement for my sins. In a moment my mind grasped the marvelous truth that all my sins were removed; for Jesus bore them in His body on the tree. I was pardoned and set at liberty. It was an overwhelming experience. God was near. His love lifted me up to the position of divine sonship by reason of the sufferings and death of my blessed Lord. A new life filled my soul.[8]

After a careful study of the New Testament, Wingren was immersed. This took place at Ragunda, Jämtland, in the fall of 1861. In obedience to a divine call, and after having attended Gustaf Palmquist's

---

[7] Ibid, p. 94

[8] Autobiographical Notes, *Svenska Standaret,* Chicago, October 3, 1922.

Bible School in the winter of 1863, he went out to preach the gospel. As a pioneer preacher in the service of the Sundsvall Mission Society, he experienced much success. The revival spread over a wide area. For a short period he also served the Baptist Church of Sundsvall as interim pastor at the same time that he pursued studies at the city's "Elementarläroverk." When the Bethel Seminary of Stockholm was founded in the fall of 1866, Wingren, Lindblom, and Backman formed the first class. Here he studied 1866–1868. In view of the desperate need of preachers, however, the faculty urged him and the other two students to terminate their studies and hasten out to preach the gospel.[9]

After a year in charge of the Baptist Church at Sundsvall, Wingren moved to Skåne, the southernmost province of Sweden. This became his main field of service in his native country, from 1869 until his emigration to America in 1880. Great spiritual darkness and confusion prevailed in the province, and the few and numerically weak Baptist churches were being torn asunder by internal strife and doctrinal heresy. Under the strong and wise leadership of Wingren, however, order was restored and the Baptist cause entered upon a new era. Malmö, the third largest city of Sweden, was chosen as a strategic center, from which the missionary work extended to a number of surrounding cities and rural districts. Bible training courses were arranged for young men and women who went out as preachers and school teachers. Many turned to the Lord, and the churches experienced a healthy growth and spiritual development.[10]

While yet in Sweden, as throughout his long life, Wingren's favorite subject was the imminent return of Christ. That doctrine was comparatively new in Sweden in those early years. But Wingren undoubtedly was the right man to preach "the blessed hope." In a sane and scriptural way he presented the grand and glorious future for God's people. The Christians who were trained under his wise leadership as a master interpreter of the Scriptures, became rooted and grounded in all the fundamentals of the Word.[11]

In 1880 America claimed the service of Eric Wingren. He was called to become the pastor of the Second Swedish Baptist Church of Chicago, to assist Edgren as teacher in the seminary, and, still more important, to aid him in the publishing of "Evangelisk Tidskrift." Having devoted himself to this threefold task for some time, finally he turned his entire attention to journalism. This became Wingren's special calling and great contribution to the Swedish Baptist cause. As has been said, "he was a journalist and editor by God's grace." In this field, especially in religious journalism, he undoubtedly stands unsurpassed among Swedes in America.

---

[9] *Årsbok,* Svenska Baptistförsamlingarna i Amerika, 1922–1923, p. 76

[10] Ibid. p. 76

[11] Ibid. p. 76. See also *Nya Wecko-Posten,* December 23, 1913; *Svenska Standaret,* September 26, 1922. *Nya Wecko-Posten,* August 26, 1896, p. 4; March 30, 1898, p. 4.

By means of his "Nya Wecko-Posten," a privately owned weekly, he became a teacher, a spiritual leader, and pastor-at-large of all Swedish Baptists. His advice was eagerly sought, and usually relied upon, both in practical questions and in the field of Biblical interpretation. His editorials, profound and thought-provoking, were "leaders" in the best sense of that word. The great doctrines of the Bible, God, Sin and Salvation, stood out in bold letters. Ministers and laymen were encouraged by Editor Wingren to write news letters from the churches, and missionaries related victories of the gospel from the four corners of the earth. Information, inspiration, and promotion, as sponsored by "Nya Wecko-Posten," were always in conformity with the Scriptures and the best Baptist traditions. Thus Eric Wingren and his paper were used to give direction and a balanced faith and message to Swedish Baptists of America.

In 1918, because of failing health, he found it necessary to close his editorial career. The ownership of "Nya Wecko-Posten" was secured by the General Conference, and "Nya Wecko-Posten" was then consolidated with "Svenska Standaret."

The closing days of his life became physically dark. His eyesight failed him who, throughout a long life, had used his keen pen, by the grace of God, to enlighten thousands. Eric Wingren went to his reward on September 19, 1922.[12]

At the celebration of the seventieth birthday of Editor Wingren, his life-long friend, Dean C. G. Lagergren, wrote:

> Such a pen as yours has never existed, and most likely will never appear again in the ranks of Swedish Baptists either here or in Sweden. Your pen, my dear brother, has simply made you immortal. The name of the author and journalist Eric Wingren is written in indelible letters on the pages of Swedish Baptist history.

---

[12] *Årsbok,* op. cit. p. 75.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

CHURCHES IN MINNESOTA

THE DIVISION of history into different clearly defined periods is evidently a more or less arbitrary procedure. For in reality historical events are so intimately related that it would be impossible at any given date to draw an accurate line of division between two periods of time. The only exception is the coming of Christ. He is the center of history, and the greater portion of mankind reckon time before and after His birth. For the sake of clearness, however, and in order to make it possible for the student of history to have a firmer grip on events and their correlation in time, chronological divisions have been found both expedient and practical.

In harmony with that historical principle the author has been led to divide the story of Swedish Baptists of America into three main parts. First, the Early Years, 1852–1871. Second, The Era of Expansion, or Growth of Churches, 1871–1902. Third, Institutional Development and Missionary Achievements, 1902–1952.

The first period was primarily a time of pioneering. The ground was broken and the seed planted. It was a slow and difficult work. The Swedish immigrants were few and scattered over a wide area, and much prejudice and opposition retarded the growth of the denomination. The workers too, were almost exclusively lay leaders and farmer preachers. But the Word of God that they preached was proclaimed in Holy Ghost power, and God added His blessing to the salvation of souls and the upbuilding of churches. To summarize some statistics stated in Part One:

In 1864, after twelve years of work, there were eleven Swedish Baptist churches in the United States, with an approximate membership of 360. Five more churches had been founded, but, for one reason or another, they were soon forced out of existence. Of the sixteen churches organized before 1865 only five exist today, namely, Village Creek and Stratford, Iowa; and Houston, Scandia and Isanti (North and South), Minnesota. The Civil War years were barren of results; no churches were formed in the period of 1860 to 1865.

But a brighter day approached. The years 1865–1870 saw sixteen new churches formed, all of these except four surviving up to the present. Thus, in the years of early pioneers, 1852–1870, there were thirty-two churches organized. Nine of the thirty-two were disbanded after a few years, leaving a net result of 23 churches with an aggregate membership of 1,500 at the beginning of 1871, when a new era was ushered in with the coming of Edgren and the founding of a theological seminary.

Even to a casual reader of Swedish Baptist history, it is apparent that the year 1871 signifies a new epoch. The two creative factors — the theological seminary and the denominational paper — both launched that year, were to have important and far-reaching influences and make possible a trained ministry and a well-informed membership. This again resulted in a sane and aggressive evangelism and soul-winning, in a healthy growth of churches that were trained and disciplined and rooted in the Word, and in a missionary out-reach with the gospel to the nearest towns and settlements all the way to the uttermost parts of the earth.

To trace the growth and development of local churches, primarily in this period, 1871–1902, will be the fundamental object in this section. Naturally, some overlapping cannot be avoided. Hence, churches organized after 1902, although not treated at length, will at least be mentioned in this part of our story.

The point of division now, in contrast to the first period, will be geographical rather than chronological. Grouped in larger or smaller areas — communities, states, and districts — the churches of Swedish Baptist believers will appear in their march of conquest on the American frontier. It is only natural that one should begin with Minnesota. For of the twenty-three churches in existence at the beginning of 1871, ten were located in this state. Moreover, in this era, 1871–1902, blessed with many revivals and a great influx of people from Sweden, the growth of churches in Minnesota kept a steady pace with developments in other parts of the country. From the point of view of membership and also churches it averaged about one-third of the whole denomination.

Comparative statistics reveal the following interesting facts: In 1874 Minnesota had a membership of 675 Swedish Baptists as compared with about 1,800 in the whole country; in 1882[1] Minnesota had 1,700 and the whole country 4,500; in 1888 Minnesota had 3,136 and the whole country 9,000; in 1902 Minnesota had about 6,000 members and the whole country 22,000.[2]

---

[1] The year 1882 marks the peak of emigration from Sweden when no less than 6,400 Swedes landed on American soil. From 1882 to 1907 there is also a much more rapid rate of increase in membership of Swedish Baptists than either before or after those years.

The reason for the proportionately large share of Swedish Baptists in Minnesota is not difficult to discover. For the "North Star State," with its ten thousand lakes and with a climate and a topography so similar to Sweden, had a peculiar and fascinating attraction for the Swedish immigrant. The eloquent words of the Swedish novelist, Fredrika Bremer, who visited Minnesota in 1850 and related her experiences in "Homes in the New World," are appropriate here:

> This Minnesota is a wonderful country, so eminently adapted for the immigrant from the North. What a glorious new Scandinavia Minnesota might become! Here the Swede would find the blue, romantic lakes, his fertile grainfields and his northern valleys. The climate, the location, and the future prospect seem more adapted to our people than any other of the American states, and none of them, it seems to me, has a brighter and more promising future than Minnesota.[3] Prophetic words indeed!

MINNEAPOLIS

Louis Hennepin, a Catholic explorer and missionary, was the first white man to behold the beauty of the Falls of St. Anthony. This was in 1680. Next came Jonathan Carver, the explorer, who visited this territory in 1776. The first Swedish settler of whom we have any record is Nils Nyberg, who arrived in the spring of 1851. However, it was not until after the close of the Civil War that the Swedes began to move in and settle in large numbers. By 1866 there were about thirty Swedes in the vicinity of St. Anthony,[4] but this number increased to 1,200 by the end of 1870.[5]

---

[2] See *Evangelisten,* op. cit., 1874, p. 171. *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* op. cit., 1882, p. 150. *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Sept. 26, 1888, p. 4. *Årsbok* för Svenska Baptist Församlingarna i Nordamerika, 1901–02. See also Rapport och Statistik över Minnesota Konferensens Svenska Baptist Församlingar, 1882–1883; 1886–1887.

[3] Quoted in *History of First Swedish Baptist Church, Minneapolis,* Minn., 1871–1921, p. 10. Nearly all Swedish Baptist churches have prepared histories, or historical sketches, some several times, at important anniversaries, either in manuscript or printed form. These histories have as a rule carefully followed the original sources such as church minutes and annual reports, and thus constitute much valuable source material for a denominational history. A copy of practically all that has been produced along this line is kept in the historical archives at Bethel Theological Seminary.

[4] The original village, especially east of the Mississippi river, was known as St. Anthony. In 1856 the whole settlement was incorporated as the town of Minneapolis, and in 1867 as the city of Minneapolis.

[5] *History of the First Swedish Baptist Church, Minneapolis,* op. cit., pp. 9–10. See also a *Sixty Years History* 1931, and a *Seventy-five years History* 1946, of the same church.

As far as is known, the first religious services ever held in Minneapolis was by a Lutheran pastor, P. Carlson, who in 1862 had located two Swedish families, and three young men and two young women. Four years later, April 16, 1866, the First Augustana Swedish Lutheran Church of Minneapolis was organized. The Baptists came second, in order of time, with a Swedish church organization.[6]

Early Swedish Baptists

The exiled preacher, F. O. Nilsson, as seen above,[7] spent the winter of 1854–55 in St. Paul. Due to a most determined opposition from two other denominations, he found the spiritual soil of a rather stony nature for Baptist propaganda. Whether Nilsson ever held any religious service in Minneapolis is not known. However, restless pioneer that he was, it is safe to assume that he must have visited the nearby town in search of his countrymen.

In 1864 there arrived directly from Sweden a man who was destined to exert a deep and far-reaching influence upon the early Swedish Baptist work of Minnesota. This man was Olaus Okerson. The career he had started in Sweden as a fiery and successful ambassador of the cross, he continued in America. On his very first evening in St. Paul, having found lodging with a certain brother Lindahl, he called the neighbors together for a meeting, and rejoiced in the marvelous privilege again to break the Bread of Life.[8] It is more than probable that he visited Minneapolis at the same time. At any rate, it is a fact that Olaus Okerson received a commission from the American Baptist Home Mission Society to serve as the first Scandinavian missionary in Minnesota. He traveled incessantly, according to reports, an average of 3,200 miles annually, sometimes by ox-cart and team, but mostly afoot. In the late sixties he often visited Minneapolis, and his visits created a desire for the Word of God and satisfied the need of public worship among the few Swedish Baptists who had settled there at that time.[9]

John Ongman apparently was the second Swedish Baptist minister to visit Minneapolis. It was in the fall of 1869, at the very beginning of his missionary labors in Minnesota. During his first visit in Minneapolis he lodged with the State Convention pioneer missionary

---

[6] Ibid. p. 10.

[7] See Ch. Three.

[8] Hall, A. G., op. cit. p. 93. *History, the First Swedish Baptist Church, Minneapolis*, p. 13.

[9] Ibid. p. 13.

Amory Gale, and on a return visit he was entertained by a Swedish brother Nilsson, who had a restaurant on Fourth Street. Ongman reported a great hunger for the Word among the Swedes of Minneapolis.

The following personal recollections of J. L. Johnson, a charter member of the First Swedish Baptist Church of Minneapolis, deserve recording:

> In the spring of 1854 Reverend John Erickson and family, and Jonas P. Johnson, the father of J. L. Johnson, settled in St. Paul. John Erickson held services in his own home and, on Sundays, in a hall. The following year Erickson moved to Scandia and Johnson to Sibley County, near Belle Plaine, where, in the fall of 1856, Erickson baptized Mr. and Mrs. Johnson in the Minnesota river. As a result of services held by John Erickson in Scandia, there were a number of conversions and baptisms. Among the candidates was Miss Carrie Mortenson, who was baptized January 28, 1866, in the lake when the ice was cut, which was three feet thick. She came to Minneapolis the following year, 1867, when she joined the First Baptist Church, and, as far as the records reveal, seems to be among the first Swedish Baptists to come to Minneapolis. Olaus Okerson held a meeting in 1866 in the Marshall Street Baptist Church, when she was present as was also J. L. Johnson, who afterward became her husband. J. L. Johnson was baptized January 31, 1869, in the First Baptist Church, being the only Swede among the twenty candidates baptized, and though the thermometer registered 30 below zero, the candidates were taken to their homes in their wet clothes. Prayer meetings were held at the homes of J. L. Johnson and Peter Nelson on Second Street, and other services were held in a hall on Washington Avenue and 13th Avenue South; these latter especially during visits of John Ongman and other visiting missionaries.[10]

Undoubtedly the first Swedish Baptists to settle in Minneapolis were the Andrew Bergquist family, who came from Scandia in 1866. Others soon followed. F. W. Malmsten moved up from Chicago, where he had been a charter member of the First Swedish Baptist Church. Eric Hernlund and family came a little later from Red Wing, Minnesota, and made their home in a stone building on Hennepin Island. The number of Swedish immersed believers continued to increase. Having united with the First American Baptist Church, they associated themselves together in a Swedish Bible Class, led by F. W. Malmsten. At first they met in the home of Peter Nelson, Second Street, between Second and Third Avenues South. Later on they met at the Hernlund home on Hennepin Island, as well as in the homes of other members.[11]

[10] Quoted in *History, the First Swedish Baptist Church, Minneapolis,* pp. 14–15.

[11] Ibid. p. 15. See also *Julgåvan,* 1893, pp. 79–86. *Svenska Standaret,* October 18, 1921.

First Swedish (Bethlehem) Baptist Church

The time had come for the organization of a Swedish Baptist church in Minneapolis. It was 1871, that epochal year in Swedish Baptist history, the year when the seminary was founded, a denominational paper was started, and six churches, all active today, were organized.[12]

Letters were granted by the First American Baptist Church to twenty-three persons. These met in the basement of the same church, June 24, 1871, and formed the First Swedish Baptist Church of Minneapolis. Such pioneer preachers as F. O. Nilsson, John A. Peterson, John Anderson, John Ongman, and Amory Gale blessed the momentous occasion with their presence. Officers were elected and arrangements made to secure a suitable meeting place. Payne's Hall over the National Exchange Bank, corner of Nicollet Avenue and Second Street, was rented, where services were held the following Sunday, when Captain R. E. Jeanson preached to an appreciative audience. The church was publicily recognized by a council on July 30 following.[13]

In the providence of God this little acorn of twenty-three believers grew and developed into a large oak. Its present membership is about one thousand. Several daughter churches have been organized, and a great host of workers has gone out from the First Swedish Baptist Church of Minneapolis to proclaim the story of life at home and abroad.

The first ten years, 1871–1881, were times of planting as well as reaping. During the pastorate of John Ring, (1872–1873), who came from Trade Lake, Wisconsin, the Lord visited the flock with a gracious revival. Baptisms were a common occurrence. Quite frequently these were held in the Mississippi river on Hennepin Island near the home of Eric Hernlund. It was an impressive scene to witness the joyful followers of the Lord, "gathered at the river," singing, "Oh, happy day that fixed my choice"; and then the long procession wending its way out into the water, while the congregation upon the banks sang praises for this wonderful salvation; and finally the preacher immersing the converts into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.[14] It was a wonderful sight which God often granted His people at that time.

John A. Peterson became the second pastor of the church. He was a man of rare gifts. Of him it was said that he bare the marks of sickness and suffering upon his outward appearance, but that he had a pure and sanctified soul. Because of failing health his term of service lasted only six months, from January to June, 1874.

---

[12] These churches were: Cokato, Minneapolis First, Lake Elizabeth and Clear Lake, Minn.; New Sweden, Maine, and Dalesburg, South Dakota.

[13] *History, First Swedish Baptist Church,* pp. 15–18

[14] Ibid. pp. 18–20

The next pastor, the third in order, marked the beginning of a theologically trained leadership. A. B. Orgren, 1875–1878, was graduated from Edgren's seminary in the spring of 1875, and the First Swedish Baptist Church of Minneapolis became his first regular charge. Furthermore, having been a student at the Royal Academy of Music in Stockholm, he was a musician of no ordinary ability, lifting the music of the church to a high standard. His aggressive leadership discovered and put to work much unused talent among the membership of the church. Conversions and accessions to the church were frequent.

In the midst of a financial depression in the late seventies the First Church of Minneapolis decided to become self-supporting. This was a forward step of faith, indeed, and undoubtedly meant much for her future growth and development. Up to this time some financial aid had been received from the Baptist State Convention. The economic depression, however, affected adversely the spiritual life of many Christians, and a spiritual drought resulted. In nearly thirty Swedish Baptist churches in Minnesota only 30 baptisms were reported during the entire year. It was John Anderson, known among his brethren as the apostle of love, who shepherded the church during those trying years, 1878–1880. His calm leadership and consecrated personality inspired confidence and gained respect everywhere for the cause he represented.[15]

Two Unique Pastors

Minneapolis was rapidly becoming one of the most Swedish cities in the United States. In 1881, 49,760 Swedes immigrated to America, and in 1882 which marks the peak of Swedish immigration, 64,607 Swedes arrived. Many of these settled in Minneapolis and became a fruitful field for religious propaganda. The First Swedish Baptist Church was wide awake to its great opportunities, and experienced in the decade of the eighties its proportionately greatest increase of members both by baptisms and letters.

In June, 1881, Frank Peterson arrived from Worthington, Minnesota, to assume the pastoral care of the church. His coming had the greatest significance both for Minneapolis and Minnesota, as well as for the whole denomination. Gifted as a leader, in an unusual degree, he exerted a powerful influence upon Swedish Baptist life and work for some fifty years.

His introductory sermon became a clarion call to go forward. It

[15] Ibid. pp. 23–24

was preached from Acts 10:33, — "Now, therefore, are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." When Pastor Peterson came to the church he found 127 members. When he resigned nine years later there were 445. In the decade, 1881–1891, 536 members were received by baptism, and 267 by letter. The banner year in the whole history of the church was the year 1887, when 139 new members were welcomed into the fellowship of the church.[16]

Everyone, from the children to the older folk, felt that a sympathetic friend and a wise and trusted leader had come. His organizing genius put new life into the whole church. One of the first moves was the organization of the young people. The constitution of the Christian Endeavor Society was secured and translated into Swedish, and the young people were organized according to the pattern of that constitution. Undoubtedly it was the first group of young people of any Swedish Baptist church thus organized. An effective and orderly type of Christian work was the result. Publicly and going from house to house, the youthful and evangelistic pastor and his young people invited sinners to repentance. The women were also organized into several societies: Ebenezer, Glada Budskapet, King's Daughters, Dorcas and East Side Daughters. The young men, too, banded themselves together into an active society.[17]

As a church editor also, Frank Peterson was a trail blazer. He began in 1888 to publish a monthly church paper, "Församlingsbladet," succeeded later by "Veckobulletinen," and still later by "The Weekly Calendar" of the Bethlehem Baptist Church. This was probably the second in order of local church papers among Swedish Baptists, being preceded only by "The Harbinger of Peace," Sioux City, Iowa, 1887.[18]

The missionary fire burned brightly in the church. The wise pastor constantly had his eyes open to discover young people whom the Lord had called into missionary service. In that decade, twelve young people responded to the call for full time service. Such a pastor and such a church could not be satisfied with simply proclaiming the gospel from their own street corner. Other areas of Minneapolis had to be evangelized. And thus two missions were started, one in the northeast part of the city in 1884, which a few years later was organized into the Elim church, and another in south Minneapolis, in the year of 1885, which developed into the Bethel Church.

---

[16] Ibid. pp. 29–30,80. See also *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Feb. 16. 1887, p. 4.

[17] Ibid. pp. 26–29

[18] Ibid., p. 28

At the center of this beehive of Christian activity there stood the pastor's home, radiating sunshine and love to pilgrims in the way. The home was always open to church members, ministers, students, and homesick immigrants. It was a veritable Bethany. Number 1901 15th Avenue South, was a well-known address to many.

It came as a great shock to the church when their beloved pastor resigned in August, 1890. He had received and felt led to accept an appointment from the American Baptist Missionary Union (the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society) to become district secretary for the Northwestern District.[19]

The second unique pastor was the silver tongued Olof Bodien. Frank Peterson, the wise organizer, fiery soul winner and eloquent preacher, and Olof Bodien, the graceful orator and the talented poet and singer — these two have never been surpassed among Swedish Baptist preachers. Bodien was a born speaker and a prince on the platform. Without any formal training for the ministry, he nevertheless reached the heights of success as a preacher. His sermons and addresses were full of illustrative matter which interested and charmed his hearers, and his sympathetic and genial social abilities made him an attractive and successful pastor and leader.[20] He began his service as pastor of the First Church in April, 1893.

In 1898 Pastor Bodien established a Bible school for children. As far as is known, this was the first attempt at regular week day Bible instruction in any Swedish Baptist church. This school was held one day a week for eight months of the year, and those completing the course were graduated at a public commencement and received their diplomas.[21] Throughout the years this school has continued to function, and it has brought much blessing in the training of children and the upbuilding of the church.

It was a long, eventful, and successful pastorate of nineteen years that closed when Olof Bodien was called to his heavenly home in March of 1912. During his term of service he had extended the hand of fellowship to one thousand new members of whom a large number had been received by baptism.

Church Buildings

Twice the buildings of the First Swedish Baptist Church were destroyed by fire, and once by a cyclone. It was a glad day when the little company of Swedish Baptists in Minneapolis, as early as 1873, had completed their first church building. It was located on the corner of 12th Avenue South and 6th Street. An addition, doubling the seating capacity of the sanctuary, was added in 1883. In the midst of cheering progress, one cold Monday noon, March 16, 1885, the clanging of fire bells was heard. The church was in flames. Soon only smoldering ruins remained.[22] But a kind Providence proved that "all things work together for good to them that love God." The Second Congregational Church, corner of 13th Avenue and 8th Street, offered its sanctuary for sale, and it was purchased in May, 1885.

---

[19] Ibid. pp. 29–30

[20] Ibid. pp. 32–33.

[21] Ibid., p. 34.

The church suffered another baptism of fire, and the building was partly destroyed on Sunday, December 3, 1893. The work of restoration, however, was completed and the building rededicated for divine service the following summer. In the month of August, 1904, a devastating cyclone swept over Minneapolis, and again the church building suffered considerable damage. But the congregation, which at that time numbered over five hundred members, set about at once to restore their temple. In 1914 a new addition was erected to provide additional room for the growing Sunday school. With 27 rooms in the building the church was now well equipped to care for the constantly increasing needs of its various departments.[23]

Evangelism

Evangelism and revivals have always held a prominent place among Swedish Baptists. In fact, without revivals and soul-winning a Baptist church as such could not survive. The First Swedish Baptist Church of Minneapolis stands in the front ranks in regard to evangelism. All its pastors have been especially talented in soul winning. Following the pattern in the denomination as a whole, it is possible to note three distinct periods of evangelism in the First Church.

In the early years and up to about 1905 the pastor and the members were in charge of their own evangelistic work. In real apostolic fashion Frank Peterson would take his young people every Sunday afternoon and go from house to house to present Christ to the unsaved. As a result the preacher nearly always had the joy of preaching to large congregations, and experienced more or less of a perennial revival. Then, too, the prayer week in January became a source of much spiritual power. The saints assembled, not to listen to a sermon, but to pray. The Spirit of God would descend on them, and a heaven-sent revival would start which sometimes prolonged the prayer week throughout the rest of the winter.[24] Undoubtedly that type of evangelism, then as always, was the most effective and far-reaching in its results.

---

[22] Ibid., p. 27

[23] Ibid., pp. 33–38.

The church entered upon a second period of evangelism in 1905 with the coming of the blind evangelist A. J. Freeman. The year before he had started upon one of the most remarkable careers of soul winning that Swedish Baptists had ever witnessed. With his daughter Esther — then about thirteen years of age — as guide Freeman came to Minneapolis in the winter of 1905–1906, and the First Church experienced in his meetings an outpouring of a revival spirit which led to the conversion of scores of people. The element of curiosity in the appearance of a blind preacher who was led about from pew to pew in the church by his young daughter in order to help souls who had a conscious need of salvation, their beautiful and appealing singing, and the preaching and witnessing of the blind man about God's redeeming grace in his own life — all this made a never-to-be-forgotten impression upon all who came within hearing of their voices. Freeman returned several times to Minneapolis, and always with much success as an evangelist.

A few years later P. G. Nelson came. He was the warm-hearted and deeply emotional evangelist who would weep sinners into the Kingdom. About the year 1917 David Anderson started out as evangelist among the Swedish Baptists. During the pastorates of Carl Vingren, 1912–1918, and Eric Carlson, 1918–1928, he held several series of protracted meetings in the First Church. His unusually Bible centered way of preaching never failed to win a response both among believers and unbelievers.

Greatly blessed of God as these evangelists were, and others who could be mentioned, it should be born in mind, however, that evangelistic pastors, together with the membership of the church, were constantly engaged in the serious business of winning the lost for Christ. Carl Vingren usually had a crowded Sunday evening service with a continuous spirit of revival. The year 1914 was marked by the reception of 123 new members, this year coming next to the banner year of 1887, when 139 new members were added to the church. Under the powerful and practical evangelistic preaching of Eric Carlson, the good work of soul saving continued to bless the church with a healthy increase in membership.

A third period of evangelism in the First Church of Minneapolis began about 1930. It was then that mostly professional and non-Swedish

---

[24] Nya Wecko-Posten, Feb. 23, 1887; p. 4

Baptist evangelists made their appearance. In the early stages of this type of evangelism, with novel and sensational methods, great crowds were often attracted and some converts made. However, even now it proved true that an evangelistic pastor like Anton Sjolund experienced more permanent results in soul winning than did the professional evangelists.

OTHER MINNEAPOLIS CHURCHES

The pioneer spirit of reaching out to other parts and starting new churches also prevailed in the First Swedish Baptist Church of Minneapolis. It considered it a sacred duty and privilege to encourage such expansion as would result in evangelizing the entire field where it is located. The first move in this direction was in 1879. Up to this time the church had consisted of members representing the three Scandinavian nationalities, and all had worked together in peace and harmony. The Norwegian and Danish members, however, had now increased to such a number as to warrant their having their own organization in order that they might thereby better reach their own fellow countrymen with the gospel. The organization of the Dano-Norwegian church occurred May 28, 1879.[25]

Elim Church

As stated above, there was a rapid increase in the Swedish population of Minneapolis, and after some years they were distributed all over the city. In the middle of the eighties quite a group of Swedish Baptists had settled in the northeast part of Minneapolis, and being some distance from the church and with poor communications, the need was felt for a center of worship of their own. As has happened so often in the history of the Christian church, the beginning was made by a few women who assembled to pray and to sew. In this they were encouraged by the missionary of the First Church, Anna Sandberg, who on May 2, 1884, met with six of the sisters to form a mission circle. It pleased the Lord to bless the days of small beginning. In 1887 a Sunday school was started, and the next year, February 21, 1888, the Elim Swedish Baptist Church was constituted with fifty-five charter members.

Space does not permit us to trace extensively the interesting story of the Elim Church. There is here, however, in this group of Baptist people a principle at work, operating both in the natural and spiritual realm, of such important nature that it cannot be ignored. It is the law of sowing and reaping, of planting and harvesting. The Master

[25] Ibid., p. 42

said, "One soweth and another repeath."[26] That is so often true in the Kingdom of God, and in a marked degree it proved true in the Elim Church.

After seven years with three different pastors, P. Ostrom, 1888–1890, C. A. Sandvall, 1890–1891, and J. P. Rosquist, 1892–1894, who were all men of God and used of Him, the church in 1895 entered upon a distinctly new era. It was ushered in by the coming of Professor Eric Sandell as shepherd and leader of the flock. For several years he had been teaching in the Swedish Baptist Theological Seminary, and both by reason of natural endowment and training he was well qualified to build a strong church. Being an eminent theologian and philosopher, a profound and independent thinker, and a great and warm-hearted preacher of the Word, he led the saints in Elim into the deeper things of God. Those were years of spiritual feasting. The teaching ministry of Eric Sandell prepared the spiritual soil of the church for a great harvest of souls. Often, too, the pastor, who was the keenest dialectician the Swedish Baptists ever produced, defended the Baptist cause both in Minneapolis and elsewhere in many public debates in which he was always declared victor.[27]

The church numbered 197 members in the fall of 1899 when the youthful V. E. Hedberg arrived to take charge of the flock. He was then a young man of twenty-seven, but had already spent one term as a missionary in Japan. Of him it could truthfully be said, "He came, he saw, he conquered." The time of reaping had come, and for many years there was a constant revival in Elim, the like of which very few churches have ever experienced. Hedberg was an evangelist and a soul winner by God's grace. When he put his tender hand on the shoulder of a lost sinner and pleaded with him to accept Christ, it was difficult even for the most hardened to resist. For many years, especially in the winter time, it was a common scene in Elim, nearly every Sunday evening, to see men and women kneel in prayer seeking salvation from sin. The writer rejoices to be counted in that number. It was a period of reaping and great ingathering of souls. When Hedberg left in 1913, the membership had reached nearly six hundred. The good work continued under the pastoral care of Jacob Peterson, 1914–1918, Ragnar Arlander, 1920–1934, John G. Johnson 1935–1949, and Rodger Goodman since 1949.

---

[26] John 4:37.

[27] *Minnesteckning.* Elim Svenska Baptistförsamlingens Tjugofemåriga Verksamhet, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1888–1913. See also *Fyrbåken,* 1903, p. 5 for a Fifteenth Anniversary Sketch. And *Fiftieth Anniversary History,* 1888–1938.

Bethel Church

It is a significant fact and indicative of much missionary vitality in the First Swedish Baptist Church of Minneapolis that two new missions were started the same year, 1884, one in the northeast part of the city, which developed into the Elim Church, and the other in south Minneapolis, which became the Bethel Church. This latter had its beginning in a little sewing school of neighborhood children invited to the home of C. G. Palmquist, 2916 25th Street South, the last Saturday in October, 1884. A Sunday school was soon started in the same home which after a few weeks became too small to provide room for all the children that came. The following fall a vacant store building was rented. This also was filled and overflowing with eager children. More spacious quarters became an urgent and pressing question. The result was a chapel, located at 29th Avenue and 25th Street, erected in the winter of 1886–1887. It was dedicated June 19, 1887. In 1910 the chapel was replaced by the present commodius church building.

Of peculiar interest in the story of the Bethel Mission, as it was called before the church was organized, is the fact that this thriving mission on the South Side became the training school for several workers of the church and the kingdom, who afterwards stepped out into larger service. Among these were A. J. Dahlstrom, Swaney Nelson, Nels Nelson, and B. L. Carlton, who served the denomination as pastors for some forty years or more. Nels Nelson was brought to Christ in the old store building referred to above. Then there was G. Arvid Hagstrom, the well known pastor and school man, Ernest Fagerstrom, Sunday school missionary and Y.M.C.A. Secretary, and W. S. Abernethy, who later became pastor of the Calvary Baptist Church, Washington, D. C., where President Harding and Secretary of State Charles E. Hughes were members.[28]

After twelve years as a mission of the First Church, the time had come to begin independent work. The Bethel Baptist Church was organized November 12, 1896 with twenty-five charter members. C. E. Oberg became its first pastor and was succeeded by E. S. Lindblad. Nels Nelson, one of the first converts of the mission, served the Bethel Church as pastor two terms, 1906–1911 and 1912–1913. He also built the present church building. The evangelistically talented E. E. Hall made a record as pastor in Bethel, serving nine years, 1914–1923, and it was his privilege to see the church and Sunday school grow to considerable proportions. Succeeding pastors have continued to lead the church to victory.

---

[28] *Tjugofemårsminnen,* Bethel Baptistförsamlingen, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1896–1921. See also *History of First Baptist Church,* Minneapolis, op. cit. pp. 43–45.

From the very beginning of the Bethel Mission the Sunday school held a most prominent place. That has been true throughout the years. Hence it is not surprising that the Bethel Church, in line with the early missionary spirit of the mother church would reach out to new fields and seek to start another Sunday school. The opportunity presented itself in the summer of 1912. Some children were gathered into a Sunday school farther south, not far from Minnehaha Falls. A chapel was erected in 1915, located at 41st Avenue and 42nd Street South. This became the home of the Minnehaha Baptist Church, which was organized in 1922, a direct outgrowth of the Sunday school. At present it is one of the active Baptist churches in Minneapolis with a large and thriving work. More or less as offshoots of the Bethlehem Church, four other churches in the Minneapolis area have been formed recently, namely, Spring Lake Park to the northeast part of the city, 1941; St. Louis Park, in the southwestern area of Minneapolis, organized in 1944; the Edgewater Baptist Church, organized in 1948, and the Wooddale Baptist Church, formed in 1949; also one daughter church of Elim, the Oak Hill Church, 1947.

In the providence of God the small group of twenty-three baptized believers who in June, 1871 banded themselves together as the First Swedish Baptist Church of Minneapolis, has grown into a large fellowship of nine churches, with a membership of approximately two thousand five hundred.

ST. PAUL

The First Baptist in St. Paul was a school teacher by the name of Harriet E. Bishop who arrived there the 13th of July, 1847. A week later she started the first Sunday school in St. Paul, which in 1849 led to the organization of the First Baptist Church. That was the same year in which Minnesota became a territory. St. Paul was then a town of some one thousand inhabitants, living under the most primitive conditions.[29]

In 1852 the first Swedes came to St. Paul. That was only a year after the first Swedish settlement of Minnesota, at Taylors Falls. By 1854 the small company of Swedes had increased to 150, and formed a Swedish Lutheran church.[30] It was about the same time, in the winter of 1854–1855, that the exiled Baptist preacher, F. O. Nilsson tried, but in vain, to establish Baptist work among the Swedes of St. Paul. A few Swedes, however, belonged to the First American Baptist Church, among them Peter Daniel Anderson and his wife, Carolina Anderson. Mrs. Anderson was immersed in Phalen Creek 1858, presumably the first Swede in St. Paul ever to receive a believer's baptism by immersion.[31]

---

[29] E. Norelius, op. cit., p. 160. *Minnesteckning,* Första Svenska Baptist församlingens i St. Paul *Fyrtioåriga Verksambet* 1873–1913, p. 21. See also *A Memorial Sketch* of the First Swedish Baptist Church, St. Paul, Minnesota. Fifty Years, 1873–1923.

[30] E. Norelius, op. cit., pp. 611–615.

Swedish Baptist preachers made occasional visits to St. Paul, among them being such pioneers as John Erickson, John Anderson, and Olaus Okerson. In the summer of 1872 a beginning was made to establish more permanent work. John Ring, who was then serving the Swedish Baptists of Minneapolis, made frequent preaching missions to St. Paul. The coming of O. S. Lindberg the same year proved a great blessing. He was a carpenter by trade. On Sunday afternoons he gathered the few Swedish Baptists who were then living in St. Paul, and others who cared to come, to his home on Seventh Street for divine worship. After a few months the services were held in the basement of the American Baptist Church. Having been encouraged to give up his trade and devote all his time to religious work, Lindberg preached Christ to his countrymen both from house to house and in public services. Some responded and turned to the Lord.[32]

First Swedish (Payne Avenue) Baptist Church

The year 1873 turned out to be of great significance in the story of Swedish Baptists of St. Paul. For in April of that year the energetic leader, John Ongman, arrived. He was destined to become the first Swedish Baptist pastor in St. Paul, and also to serve the church at two later periods. Previous to this, for some three or four years, Ongman had traveled as missionary in Minnesota. Now the time was ripe, he felt, to concentrate all efforts on the St. Paul field. Indefatigably he labored, in spite of many difficulties, to bring the few immersed believers of Swedish descent together into a church organization. Success crowned his efforts, and on May 18, 1873, the First Swedish Baptist Church (now Payne Avenue Baptist Church) was constituted with twelve charter members.[33]

---

[31] A daughter of P. D. and Carolina Anderson was married to G. Arvid Hagstrom, who for five years served as pastor of the First Swedish Baptist Church of St. Paul.

[32] *Minnesteckning.* St. Paul Första, op. cit., pp. 23–25.

[33] Ibid., p. 26. See also Hall, A. G., *Svenska Baptisternas Historia* Vol. II, pp. 172–176; P. Ryden. *Svenska Baptisternas i Minnesota Historia,* 1853–1918, pp. 207–210.

As compared with Minneapolis, St. Paul has always been rather stony soil for Protestants in general, and for Swedish Baptists in particular. At least two reasons can be assigned for this condition. In the first place, St. Paul is predominantly a Catholic city, and under the influence and control of a determined hierarchy. Second, the Swedish population of St. Paul has always been more limited in number than that of Minneapolis. At the time of the organization of the First Swedish Baptist Church, the Swedish population of St. Paul did not exceed one thousand, and the majority of these were very definitely under the influence of the liquor element.[34] Moreover, to make matters even more discouraging, some of the members in the small Swedish Baptist church failed to measure up to reasonably normal Christian standards, whereas others, being Baptists only in name, refused to affiliate themselves with the Baptist fellowship and assumed an attitude of hostility and criticism. No wonder John Ongman, who served the church as its pastor, 1873–1875, felt compelled to write:

> To work in such a field and under such discouraging conditions was no easy task. More than once I was ready to give up. But God in marvelous grace and love did not permit the tender plant to die. Patiently He nourished it for more favorable times in the future.[35]

When Ongman, in the summer of 1875, moved to Chicago the group of believers had increased to a membership of thirty-three. The succeeding years under the pastoral care of K. A. Ostergren, 1875–1877, A. B. Orgren, 1877–1878, and A. B. Nordberg, 1878–1881, the church experienced more sowing in tears, but also some reaping in joy. At the close of A. B. Nordberg's term of service the church numbered 99 members.

An outstandingly good and strong lay leadership has always characterized the First Swedish Baptist Church of St. Paul. Its deasons, trustees and other officers have been known for their sterling character, and firm, stable faith. When balanced with wisdom such leadership has done much to help the church successfully to weather many storms and to grow to the second largest church in the Swedish Baptist fellowship. The most prominent in this group of laymen was G. O. Ostergren. As a personality "he was higher than any of the people," and few if any among Swedish Baptists attained to his proportions. Having received a good education in Sweden, and being gifted with keen judgment and good common sense, Ostergren remained for nearly sixty years, from the origin of the church until his death in 1932, the unquestioned leader of the First Swedish Baptist Church of St. Paul. As a Christian he was kind, fair, considerate, and generous. In the eighties, when the church building on Burr and Collins Streets was erected, Ostergren mortgaged his own home to pay for the lots. At another time, when the deacons in the absence of the pastor engaged in a spirited and warm criticism of the preacher, Ostergren calmly remarked, "Brethren, nothing is gained by our criticism. If we have any objection against our pastor, let us appoint a committee to discuss the matter with him." It was sound advice and saved the church much trouble. In fact, many believe that the very existence of the First Church depended to a large extent upon the leadership of G. O. Ostergren.[36]

---

[34] *Minnesteckning,* op. cit., p. 30. *Nya Wecko-Posten,* June 7, 1893, p. 5

[35] Ibid., pp. 30–31. See also *Nya Wecko-Posten,* June 7, 1893, p. 5 and June 2, 1903, p. 5.

Prominent Pastors

"Such pastor, such church," is nearly always true. For human nature everywhere responds to leadership. The first pastor, John Ongman, who served the church three terms, 1873–1875, 1881–1885, and 1886–1890, made a profound and lasting impression upon the people to whom he ministered. Indeed, it seems that the spirit of Ongman, after some seventy-five years, is still felt in the First Church of St. Paul. He was a man with an iron will and a warm heart. Resourceful and aggressive as an organizer and leader, he ruled as a father and not as a tyrant. Like the men who control the destinies of nations he knew how to hide the steel hand in a glove of velvet. Moreover, his leadership produced definite results, for he had learned to concentrate on a few things, to put first things first, especially as it concerned the spiritual upbuilding of the church. It was preeminently in that field, in the realm of the deeper Christian life, the Spirit-filled life, that Ongman's distinctive contribution was made. His own definite experience of the abundant life in Christ enabled him to proclaim with power a sane and scriptural view of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. And the results did not fail. Many of the saints learned the secret of an intimate walk with Christ, as well as of reaching out to bring the unsaved into the fold.

His first term was a time of planting and sowing in tears. The time of reaping, however, was soon to come. From the very beginning of Ongman's second term, in November, 1881, there was a note of victory present in the First Church. In his introductory sermon he preached from Luke 5:5: "At thy word I will let down the net." And it was not let down in vain. A spirit of revival descended upon the praying believers, and people hungry to hear the gospel of saving grace crowded the chapel on Canada and Tenth Streets. The following year, 1882, a more commodious church building was erected at Burr and Collins Streets. In the eighties, morever, there was a great influx of Swedish people to the east side of St. Paul, and many of these united with the Baptist church. Not less than 397 new members were added to the church between 1881 and 1885.

---

[36] Ibid. pp. 38, 89–90.

In November of 1886, Ongman entered upon his third term of service as pastor of the First Swedish Baptist Church of St. Paul. As was so often the case in those early years, the January prayer week became the starting point for a sweeping revival. The meetings continued all winter, both in the church and in the homes, and a great company of men and women turned to the Lord. The missionary minded pastor also knew how to put the converts to work, a thing which is so necessary for a healthy spiritual growth and development. In line with this need the church reached out into several parts of the city with Sunday schools and other types of Christian activity.[37]

Ongman was the organizer, evangelist and deeper life preacher. His immediate successor, O. P. Peterson, 1890–1905, has the distinction of serving the longest pastorate in the history of the church. He carried on in the Ongman tradition, especially regarding the Spirit filled life and the deeper things of God. His was a teaching type of ministry, upbuilding and training the saints for an effective spiritual service. Nor was direct soul winning neglected. In the winter of 1897–1898 a sweeping revival resulted in a large membership addition to the church. Other important events in this period were the organization of a new church, the Second Swedish Baptist Church (Central) of St. Paul, which was formed with 34 charter members in the spring of 1893, and the erection of a new church building in the summer of 1898. For several years missionary work, including a Sunday school, had been carried on in the Arlington Hills district, and finally it became evident that that area was rapidly becoming the center of the Swedish population in St. Paul. On the 25th of June, 1899, the new sanctuary on Payne Avenue and Sims Street, with a seating capacity of nearly one thousand, and one of the largest in the whole denomination, was dedicated to the Lord for public service. O. P. Peterson moved among his people as a prophet and a man of God. His powerful, eloquent, and warmly evangelistic preaching attracted capacity audiences. He was regarded with an almost worshipful reverence. As a bombshell, therefore, his resignation fell upon the unsuspecting church, when their much beloved pastor announced, in February 1905, his intention to leave the denomination, having accepted a call to the First Covenant Church of Rockford, Illinois.[38]

---

[37] Ibid., pp. 28–48, 90–91. See also *Victory Anniversary,* 70 Years of Service Payne Avenue Baptist Church 1873–1943.

Under the prevailing conditions it was no easy task to assume leadership of the church. However, God, who never deserts His own, had the right man for the place. The youthful and energetic Magnus Larson, full of progressive ideas in church work, assumed the responsibilities of pastor in the fall of 1905. His was the joy, on the second month of his ministry in the First Church on one Sunday to immerse forty-five believers who were converts of the city-wide J. Wilbur Chapman evangelistic campaign. A number of progressive plans were put into operation, such as the publishing of a weekly church paper "Veckobulletinen," and a church directory, the appointment of a permanent finance committee, a music committee, and other necessary committees, conducting Bible classes for children and adults, the securing of a woman missionary and a student helper.[39]

It is not surprising, however, that the staunchly conservative membership of the First Church, trained under Ongman and O. P. Peterson, refused in some matters to follow the leadership of Magnus Larson. He appeared to be too much of an innovator. But later years undoubtedly proved the value of his brief and progressive ministry. Further, there was a net increase in membership of 108 during his term of service of three years and ten months. The total membership at that time reached 597, only eight members less than of the First Church of Minneapolis.

In November of 1909, G. Arvid Hagstrom became the pastor of the First Church. By reason of a varied experience as Sunday school missionary in Illinois, as successful pastor of the First Swedish Baptist Church of Chicago for ten years, and as mission secretary of the General Conference for three years, he was well prepared to enter upon his new duties. The new pastor, being unusually warm-hearted and evangelistic, had a friendly word for everyone and took a personal interest in young and old. The Sunday school experienced a remarkable growth. At the end of 1910 it recorded an enrollment of 905. A Home Department, a Cradle Roll, Baraca and Philathea classes, and a number of other organized classes were launched in this period. In fact, some of the old-timers feared that over-organization would undermine the spiritual strength and vitality of the church. In 1911 a modern and commodius Sunday school plant was erected, making still more effective service possible. When the church, in the spring of 1913, celebrated its fortieth anniversary it had attained a membership of 665, being at that time the largest in the General Conference. The ever busy pastor extended his good ministry into a great multiplicity of boards, agencies, and organizations of a civic, philanthropic, and missionary nature. Usually he served either as chairman or secretary of the respective boards. At one time he reported active membership in not less than sixteen such boards or organizations. At the beginning of 1914 Bethel Institute claimed G. Arvid Hagstrom as president of the combined schools. His successors in the First Church, John A. Swanson, 1914–1923, F. C. Hamlin, 1924–1925, J. G. Oster, 1926–1930, O. Milton Lind, 1931–1938, Martin Erikson, 1939–1945, and Walter Olson 1946–1951, have all continued to build on the good old foundation, proclaiming the saving gospel of God.

---

[38] Ibid., pp. 49–63, 92–93.

[39] This author considers it a great privilege to have been associated with Magnus Larson and the Payne Avenue Church as assistant pastor in the summer of 1907, when as a young student at Bethel Academy he had his first experiences in direct Christian service.

Missionary Endeavor

From their very beginning Swedish Baptists have been a missionary-minded people. In a large degree that was true of the First Church of St. Paul. While still only a small and financially poor group of believers in the seventies, it is recorded that they sent missionary contributions to China and other foreign fields.[40] Nor were the poor and the needy in the immediate home field forgotten. In 1885, when the ordinary funds for the poor were considered insufficient, the members were urged to bring food and clothing to the church for distribution among people in want.[41] Thus, by relieving physical suffering, a way was often found to present Christ to sin sick souls.

Under Ongman's leadership the church was unusually active in missionary endeavors. In 1888 it had mission stations and Sunday schools in South St. Paul, Arlington Hill, St. Paul Park, St. Anthony Hill, West Seventh Street, and Rice Street. From time to time, and even in its early years, the church engaged missionaries, both men and women, to assist in the rapidly growing work in the local field. Among them we note Ellen Berg, Elizabeth Johnson, Fredrika Hedberg, Judith Johanson, J. M. Shulene, John A. Roos, August Ekstrom, Adolf Olson, and Lottie Erickson. On the foreign field the church has been represented by Mary Danielson and Gerda Paulson in Japan, Dr. and Mrs. Jonas Ahlquist, Mr. and Mrs. Albert Dahlby, and Mr. and Mrs. William Hagstrom in Assam, and Elsie Larson in South India. Moreover, a very large group of young men of the First Church have entered the Christian ministry. A world-wide service for the Master is thus continually carried on.

---

[40] *Minnesteckning,* St. Paul, op. cit., p. 36.

[41] Ibid., p. 44.

Among the many branch Sunday schools conducted by the First Church, there was one on Albermarle Street, started in the summer of 1889. Under the blessings of God this work gained a good foothold in the community. Moreover, several Swedish Baptist families had settled in this part of the city. After a few years these friends proposed to organize a new church.

Second (Central) Church

It can be termed a real victory for the Baptist cause in St. Paul when thirty-four members of the First Swedish Church asked for their letters to form a new congregation. The date of organization was March 28, 1893. August Ekstrom, who at that time was serving as missionary in the First Church, accepted a call to become pastor of the Second Swedish Baptist Church. He was a man of God if ever there was one. His saintliness was genuine, not the kind that chills, but that which warms and attracts the souls of men. The Spirit filled life had one of its best exponents in August Ekstrom. Even the outward features of the preacher reflected the love and purity of heaven. There existed the most complete harmony between profession and life. After some years he served a second term, and led the saints even further into green pastures. Without any formal training for the ministry, Ekstrom nevertheless excelled as a preacher and interpreter of the deeper things of God. A line of talented and faithful ministers of the Word throughout the years have carried on the good work that was started by August Ekstrom in the Second Church: Magnus Johnson, Fred Palmborg, Axel Tjernlund, Carl Orest, Carl Antonson, Arvid Edstam, Eric Lindholm, Eric Anderson, and L. E. Petersen. A new church building was erected on Rice and Fuller Streets in 1899, and in 1913 the work was moved to the Midway district near Snelling and University Avenues, a beautiful temple was constructed, and the name of the congregation was changed to the Central Baptist Church.[42] The Midway field afforded rich opportunities for further expansion.

---

[42] Ibid., p. 52. See also *The Golden Record,* 1893–1943. *A Fifty Years History* of the Central Baptist Church, St. Paul, Minnesota. *Svenska Standaret,* May 2, 1918.

Bethany Church

In South St. Anthony Park, located midway between St. Paul and Minneapolis, Swedish people began to move in during the late eighties. By 1898, when the religious work that led to the forming of the Bethany Baptist Church was commenced, there were approximately one hundred Swedish families located in that area. Among these there were a few Baptists who had their membership in the First and in the Second Swedish Baptist churches of St. Paul and in the Elim Church of Minneapolis. Being anxious to reach their countrymen, and primarily little children, with the gospel, they started a Sunday school in March, 1899. The following January a mission composed of twelve members was organized. Both the mission and the Sunday school prospered, enjoying the active support of many faithful workers from the Elim Baptist Church of Minneapolis.[43] It was a day of great rejoicing when on April 26, 1903, the Bethany Mission and Sunday school took possession of their new house of worship. Here the Bethany people still worship the God of their fathers.

The first pastor, A. J. Dahlstrom, began his work abous six months before the organization of the church. With eleven charter members, the Bethany Baptist Church was formed on May 14, 1905. A. J. Dahlstrom, a "self-made" man, yet well trained under the efficient leadership of Frank Peterson in the First Swedish Baptist Church of Minneapolis, as well as in the great school of human experience, laid a good foundation for the Bethany Church. In church order and discipline, and in stewardship and missionary giving, the Bethany Church for a long time stood in the front ranks of Conference churches. Dahlstrom remained as pastor seven years; his successor, Adolf Olson, also completed a term of seven years, with five additional years as interim pastor; and Arthur Ellison, the fourth pastor, likewise ministered to the congregation seven years.

The Wheelock Parkway Church

In 1914 the First Church (Payne Avenue) started a Sunday school in a little hall on Payne Avenue and Nevada Street. It developed into a mission, known as the Wheelock Parkway Chapel, in charge of students from Bethel Seminary. The chapel was dedicated 1919. During the seventieth anniversary celebration of the Payne Avenue Church, it granted letters to the Wheelock Parkway group to organize a congregation of its own. This was in the month of May, 1943. With its aggressive pastor, Harvey Hill, this church, one of the most recent of the Conference Baptist churches of St. Paul, is approaching a membership of one hundred.[44]

---

[43] *Nya Wecko-Posten,* March 14, 1900, p. 4; June 20, 1900, p. 5; October 10, 1900, p. 5; August 19, 1902, p. 4 — *History* of the Bethany Swedish Baptist Church, St. Paul, Minnesota, 1905–1930, pp. 7–16.

The youngest of the St. Paul churches is the Calvary Church, founded in 1947 and located in the North Midway district in the area of Bethel College and Seminary.

One other St. Paul church, coming from another communion, namely, the Johnson Parkway, has recently joined the Conference fellowship.

To the southeast, and not very far from St. Paul, there are two churches, Red Wing, organized in 1892, and Lake City, which was formed 1873. The church northeast of St. Paul, in Forest Lake, organized in 1944, may also be included in the same area, as well as the White Bear Church, organized in 1950.

---

[44] *Victory Anniversary,* op. cit., pp. 11–12.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

CHURCHES IN MINNESOTA (Continued)

To trace the story of the over one hundred local Swedish Baptist churches of Minnesota would not be possible within the scope of this work. It will rather be the aim to observe the growth of churches in the various sections or districts of the state, such as Isanti County, Western Minnesota, Duluth, and the Red River Valley. That the early days of pioneering should receive the major treatment is only natural. For the last decades lie within the memory of most of our readers, and have as yet hardly passed into history.

ISANTI DISTRICT

As stated in chapters five and seven, where the story of the Isanti and the Stanchfield churches is related, Isanti County is preeminently a Swedish Baptist field. A Lutheran historian complained that very few of the people confessed the Lutheran faith, and that the field was unusually hard.[1] With some variation from time to time, Isanti County and neighboring communities counted nearly twenty Swedish Baptist churches. Magnus Berglund, who for many years traveled as Sunday school missionary in Minnesota, asserted that, in the horse and buggy days, he could leave his home at Cambridge not earlier than eight o'clock Sunday morning and reach any one of not less than fourteen or fifteen Baptist churches in time for morning worship.

Like so many other towns in America of the same name, Cambridge received its name from the renowned university city of England. Swedes moved in here in the early eighteen-fifties, and it has been estimated that at least ninety percent of the people were either born in Sweden or born of Swedish parentage. After some years it became apparent that Cambridge would become the center of the county. In 1876 it was incorporated as a village, but not until 1899 was the Great Northern Railway built, connecting Cambridge with St. Paul-Minneapolis and Duluth.[2]

The early Baptist pioneers in Isanti County came mostly from the provinces of Dalarne, Hälsingland, and Medelpad, Sweden. They had passed through the great religious awakening which swept especially the northern part of Sweden about 1850 and resulted in the launching of the Baptist movement of that country. Like the Pilgrims and the Puritans, they had suffered much persecution for their faith, and had come to the New World to escape imprisonment and to build their homes, rear their families and worship God according to the dictates of their conscience and the teachings of the Bible.[3]

---

[1] *Fyrtio År* 1888–1928. En Minnesskrift över Cambridge, Minnesota Svenska Baptistförsamling, p. 6. See also *Svenska Standaret,* November 26, 1918.

[2] *Thirty Years History,* Cambridge Baptist Church, 1918. p. 3

The nature of the true gospel is to reach out to the "other towns." And the original Isanti Church (see Chapter Six) was no exception to that rule. In East Cambridge, in the Moody School as the center of worship, we find a thriving Sunday school and regular services as early as 1878.[4] In the village of Cambridge there were frequent services conducted by Allfrid Sjolander, who was then pastor of the church which is today known as Isanti North. These services were held in the schoolhouse and in the "Court House Hall" during the years 1883–1885. A building adequate for the need was later erected.[5]

The Cambridge Church was organized with thirty-six charter members on November 14, 1888. By reason of its central and strategic location, as well as because of good leadership, this church, throughout the years, has exerted a great influence not only upon the local field but also upon the whole of Isanti County. The Cambridge pastors became a sort of Baptist bishops for the whole area.

Throughout the years the church experienced a wholesome growth and steady increase in members. For the little town of Cambridge, with a high degree of civic and moral achievement and with a population predominantly Baptist in character, attracted Baptists both from Sweden, and also from various parts of the United States. Moreover, it pleased the Lord, from time to time, to visit the praying believers with gracious revivals, thus adding to the church such as were saved.

The ministry of Emanuel Bjorkquist, the second in order of pastors in the Cambridge church, 1895–1904, is typical from several points of view. A man of many and diverse gifts, with a clear vision of the future, a practical turn of mind, and exceedingly friendly and kind, he exerted a great influence not only in the church but in the entire community. In those years, in the middle nineties, the nation experienced one of the worst economic depressions in its history. Potatoes, for many years the chief crop of Isanti County, had to be hauled to

---

[3] *Fifty Years,* First Baptist Church, Cambridge, Minnesota, 1888–1938, p. 5.

[4] *Fyrtio År,* op. cit., p. 39.

[5] Ibid., p. 40.

Harris, some fifteen miles distant, and sold for five cents a bushel. Pastor Bjorkquist speaks, nevertheless, in glowing terms about the sacrificial spirit that prevailed both in the church and in the community. Of the believers it could be said, as Paul said of the churches in Macedonia, "Their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality."[6]

In true missionary fashion — for Bjorkquist throughout his long life[7] was preeminently a missionary — the pastor broke the bread of life not only in the Cambridge church but also in the surrounding communities, such as Grandy, Long Lake, Spencer Brook, Pine Lake, Bradford, and Spring Vale, with five or six services every week. Such persistent work was bound to bear fruit, and frequent revivals encouraged the faithful servant of God. After nine years of service in Cambridge under Bjorkquist's leadership, the church reached a membership of 200.

The gospel of grace is also the social gospel at work. During Bjorkquist's ministry, Cambridge experienced a much needed moral housecleaning. The young pastor, being kindness personified, could become bold as a lion in a fight for moral righteousness and purity. The church stood solidly back of the pastor in this fight, and so did all the right thinking men and women in the community, with the result that the village was relieved of a moral pesthouse, the saloon. The women, in true "Carrie Nation" style, pulled down the last "blind pig" shack in town, with the "pig" sitting in the basement, surrounded by his wares, and threatening the women with arrest for having destroyed his place of business. However, they were not afraid, but stepped boldly up and said, "Don't forget me!" Net result: the bootlegger left town on the next train. The Church of Christ is a militant body that must oppose the forces of evil wherever these are found, in high places or low.[8]

The Cambridge church was one of the first in the whole Conference that sensed the need of services in English. It was Bennet Erickson, Bjorkquist's successor in 1904, a man of clear vision of the future, and conscious of the fact that there was no English speaking church in that whole district, who launched the new venture. Not without a struggle however, was the language problem solved. To begin with, the English language was used every other Sunday evening until gradually it displaced the Swedish language entirely. The experience in Cambridge was repeated in other churches. For both pastor and people the bilingual situation created many difficulties. But patience and divine grace brought the churches safely through this period which lasted more or less for some twenty-five years. Bennet Erickson was a man of order, a clear thinker, a profound theologian, an able speaker, and a warm-hearted friend.[9]

---

[6] Ibid., pp. 43–44.

[7] Bjorkquist passed on to his reward in February, 1947, age 82, at Warren, Oregon. After serving the Minnesota churches in Leenthrop, Milaca, and Worthington, and also traveling several years as a missionary in Minnesota, he moved to Oregon where he was engaged in missionary labors the last twenty-five years of his life. It had always been his desire to close his earthly career in church. That desire was granted, for only about five minutes after the service had started in the little Baptist church at Warren, Oregon, Bjorkquist's active spirit was released, and he entered into his eternal reward.

[8] Ibid., p. 44.

Two longer pastorates contributed much to the Baptist cause in Cambridge. Axel Lindgren, 1914–1925, was a man of great social gifts and an unusual memory for names and faces. Perhaps none of the pastors so thoroughly covered the community in home visitation as did Axel Lindgren. This type of work always brings results. Good crowds filled the sanctuary, and many turned to the Lord. He welcomed to the church 395 new members. Another eleven years' pastorate began in 1926 when G. A. Gustafson took up the work in Cambridge. In wise leadership and in ability to effectively expound the Word, he had few equals. During this period, in the early thirties, the Cambridge Church erected a stately and beautiful sanctuary which was dedicated Easter Sunday, 1931. The soul winning work, with assistance from talented evangelists throughout the years, bore a rich fruitage. In the summer of 1927 over 100 souls were immersed and united with the church.

The other churches in the district, just as nobly and faithfully as the believers in Cambridge, promoted the cause of Christ in the upbuilding of His Kingdom. At present there are some eighteen Conference churches, including Cambridge, in this area extending in a radius from Cambridge of about twelve to fifteen miles. Isanti North organized 1860; Isanti South 1860 (see Ch. Seven); Stanchfield, 1866 (see Ch. Eight); Fish Lake, 1873; Rush Lake, 1873; Grasston, 1882; Brunswick, 1884; Dalbo, 1884; East Rock Creek, 1885; Spring Vale, 1886; Quamba, 1892; Harris, 1893; Milaca, 1893; Oxford, 1907; Isanti Elim, 1922; Mora, 1937; and Rush City, 1946.[10]

WESTERN MINNESOTA

This is a more or less clearly defined area extending from Worthington in the southwestern corner of the state to Brainerd, Alexandria, and Fergus Falls in the Northwest. Within this territory there are some thirty-six to forty Conference Baptist churches. Most of these are small in number, but at least five of them have each a membership of from one hundred fifty to two hundred fifty. It is of interest to note also that eight of these churches were formed in the eighteen-seventies, eight in the eighties, and seven in the nineties. The churches at Cokato, Lake Elizabeth, and Clear Lake were all organized in 1871.

---

[9] Ibid., p. 45.

[10] Of several of these churches there are histories, in printed or manuscript form, preserved in the Historical Collection at Bethel Seminary. See also *Zions Wakt,* July 1875; *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Feb.–March, 1904; Sept. 9, 1913; *Svenska Standaret,* April 8, 1914; July 15, 1914; March 1, 1917; Nov. 21, 1922; Oct. 26, 1925.

The Swedish Baptist Church of Cokato was formed June 11, 1871, with nine charter members. A few years earlier a group of immigrants had arrived from Sweden, some of whom were Baptists. It did not take long for the trail blazing pioneer Olaus Okerson, to discover this new settlement of Swedes, and he was the first one to preach the New Testament gospel in Cokato. The preaching was not in vain, for several repented and believed unto salvation. The little group of immersed believers in Cokato believed in spreading the good news, with the result that during the first three years some forty members were added to the church by conversion and baptism. A spirit of revival prevailed in the community.[11]

In July of 1875 H. Halverson[12] wrote in "Zions Wakt" from Cokato:

> It has been our great joy to see many sinners brought to the feet of Jesus where they have found peace through faith in His blood. Glory to His Name! Not so few have been immersed and have joined the church during the past year. A year ago we started to build our meeting house although the prospects were dark. We began in faith, and truly the promise has been realized. "All is possible for him who believes." The house was completed this spring. It was our privilege to be host to the Minnesota Conference this summer. The Conference started June 4, and was attended by nineteen ministers, and about fifty other delegates and friends from sister churches. The Lord worked in our midst through His Spirit. Seven souls professed faith in Christ during the Conference, of whom most were from Grove City and a few from Willmar.[13]

A father had come to attend the Conference accompanied by his four daughters. One of these was already a believer, but it was his joy to return home with all four girls rejoicing in the Lord. It was indeed a touching scene to see this father rejoice and praise God for

[11] *Seventy Years.* A History of the Swedish Baptist Church, Cokato, 1871–1941, pp. 4–6.

[12] Seventy-two years later this same Halvarson, well up in his nineties, was still in good health and living at Los Angeles.

[13] *Zions Wakt,* Chicago, July, 1875, p. 4.

the conversion of his daughters. Such revival experiences were common at the annual meetings of the early conferences.

The present commodious church building was erected 1897, and dedicated to divine worship March 6, 1898. O. S. Lindberg, one of the pioneer Swedish Baptist preachers of Minnesota, was the first pastor of the Cokato church, and served three different terms, or fourteen years in all. From the very beginning of organized work, the Baptist believers have exerted a profound influence in favor of moral righteousness and spiritual Christianity in the beautiful little town of Cokato as well as upon the surrounding countryside.[14]

Lake Elizabeth is located in the west central portion of Minnesota, due west of Minneapolis and some thirty miles west of Cokato. This area of the state, with its woods and beautiful lakes and, above all, fertile plains, early attracted the pioneers. The first ones to arrive, a group of three families, came in the spring of 1858. One of these families, Erik Eastlund, had Swedish Baptist connections. Other pioneers, most of them Scandinavians, joined their company, and things began to look prosperous for these hard working settlers. It was the quiet before the storm. For on the eighteenth of August, 1862, the Sioux Indians struck with ferocious fury at the white settlers. Several hundred in this area lost their lives. The settlers at Lake Elizabeth however, succeeded in escaping to Forest City. After the storm was over the intrepid pioneers returned and continued breaking ground and building homes.

As in so many other places in the state, Olaus Okerson, often called the apostle of Minnesota, started the work and laid a good spiritual foundation in Lake Elizabeth. It is likely he preached here as early as 1866. In January of 1868 a church was constituted, composed of twelve charter members. The following year the work of this congregation was located at Grass Lake, and all the Baptists of Kandiyohi County were united into the Grass Lake Baptist Church.[15]

The distance, however, between Grass Lake and Lake Elizabeth was considered too great, and consequently the believers at Lake Elizabeth found it advisable to organize a church of their own.

This took place July 7, 1871, when nineteen born again men and women united into a New Testament fellowship. The history of the Lake Elizabeth church, in membership always comparatively small, is typical of many Baptist churches, especially in the rural districts. In the first place, there were many and long vacancies without pastoral leadership, and the pastorates, particularly in the early years were mostly of short duration. Second, revivals, which have always been one of the creative factors in Baptist history, at frequent intervals brought new life and encouragement to the small church. In 1877 "a revival broke out and many came to a saving faith in Christ. Twelve new members were added to the church." In 1885 "the church experienced new victories; sixteen were immersed and four received on confession of faith." During the summer of 1908 under the leadership of P. G. Nelson, who previously had served as pastor of the church and now traveled as evangelist in Minnesota, a most sweeping revival of religion visited the Lake Elizabeth church. More than a score were immersed and entered the Baptist fellowship. Third, this church shared the experience of most rural churches in that many of their members migrated to the large cities. This drain often made the work difficult and discouraging. However, such sacrifices on the part of the smaller churches, as a rule, never constitute a permanent loss to the Kingdom of God. The large city churches have benefited by the faithful service of many who through the years have found the pearl of great price in some small country church.[16]

---

[14] *Svenska Standaret,* Aug. 9, 1921, p. 7.

[15] *Femtio Års Berättelse,* 1871–1921, Om Svenska Baptistförsamlingen i Lake Elizabeth (M.S.), pp. 2–4. See also *First Fifty Years,* 1875–1925, First Baptist Church, Willmar, Minnesota, p. 5.

Later in the year, October 21, 1871, the Clear Lake Church was organized. This place is located some seventy-five miles southwest of Minneapolis. Although comparatively small in membership, and served mostly by student pastors, the Clear Lake church has carried on regular work in soul winning and in the upbuilding of the saints. In the city of Mankato, located in the same general area, the Swedish Baptists organized a church in 1892.

On the very first day of 1872 another Swedish Baptist church came into existence in western Minnesota. In the summer of 1871 four Baptist families, including pastor Martin Dahlquist of Grove City, located in the area of Leenthrop (Maynard) some forty miles southwest of Willmar. These organized themselves into a Baptist church January 1, 1872. Here as elsewhere pioneering, both in a physical and spiritual sense, involved much hardship and great sacrifices. Gradually, however, the sod house gave place to the more commodious and well built frame dwelling, and material prosperity rewarded the labor of the hard working tiller of the soil. Spiritual victories, also, brought much joy and encouragement to the small group of believers at Leenthrop. The Lord added to the church those who were saved, so that the membership at one time reached about one hundred and seventy-five. As in the case of so many other rural churches, the Baptists at Leenthrop realized the greater opportunities for an aggressive work in the nearby town of Maynard where a church building was secured some thirty years ago and where the original Leenthrop church now serves the Lord.

---

[16] *Femtio Års Berättelse,* op. cit. pp. 6, 8, 11, 16.

In the long succession of ministers who have served this church, John Anderson, "the apostle John" among the early Swedish Baptist pioneers of Minnesota (see Ch. Nine) merits special mention. Leenthrop, where he served as pastor 1885–1887, became his last charge, and there he died and lies buried.[17]

The city of *Willmar,* located about one hundred miles due west of Minneapolis, is the largest place between the Twin Cities and Sioux Falls, South Dakota, to the southwest, and Fargo, North Dakota, to the northwest. The fertile plains and wooded, picturesque hills around Willmar received their first white settlers in the summer of 1857.[18] Among these there were not a few Scandinavians. Many of the first settlers lost their lives in the fearful Indian massacre of August, 1862. For a few years the settlement was practically abandoned. Gradually, however, some of the sturdy pioneers braved the danger and hardships and returned to break the ground, build homes, and plant the kingdom of God. The city of Willmar had its beginning as a trading place in 1869. It was named in honor of a Belgian stock broker, Leon Willmar, at the time living in London, England, and his son Paul, who for a number of years pursued farming on a large scale northeast of the city.[19]

A number of Baptists located at Willmar, and Olaus Okerson, the missionary, always ready to seize every opportunity to preach the gospel and plant Baptist churches on the Minnesota frontier, realized the importance of centralizing the work in the county seat town. On May 30, 1875, a meeting was called in the courthouse for the purpose of organizing a Baptist church in the city of Willmar. Okerson presided over the service, and fourteen Baptists became charter members of the new congregation.[20] With a field rich in possibilities for growth and with a group of believers having a will to work, it is not surprising that this church has developed into the largest Conference church in western Minnesota.

---

[17] *Forty Years History* of the Leenthrop Baptist Church (MS) 1912. *Fifty Years History* of the Leenthrop Baptist Church, 1922, (MS). See also *Svenska Standaret,* Sept. 10, 1913; *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Aug. 13, 1912.

[18] *First Fifty Years,* 1875–1925. First Baptist Church, Willmar, Minnesota, p. 1.

[19] Ibid., p. 1.

[20] Ibid., pp. 5–6. See also *Nya Wecko-Posten,* June 20, 1900, p. 5, and *Svenska Standaret,* June 16, 1925.

John Hollstrom, a well-known pioneer preacher in Minnesota, became the first pastor of the little flock. The meetings of the new church were usually held in the courthouse, but sometimes in the homes of the members. The following June the Minnesota Conference held a meeting in Cokato, and there O. J. Ahlstrom was converted. He was baptized in July of the same year as the first trophy of the little church for the Master, and, together with N. L. Winblad, remained throughout a long life a faithful pillar in the Willmar congregation.[21]

From the early records of this church there are certain items of more than ordinary interest. In a meeting held April 5, 1879, it was decided to take an offering every three months for the Theological Seminary in Chicago.[22] How welcome these offerings must have been to J. A. Edgren, the founder of the school, who was struggling desperately with financial difficulties and more than once came near giving up his beloved school work! All honor to this small group of believers who manifested a practical interest in ministerial education at a time when most Swedish Baptists failed to see the need of trained preachers.

A second factor, also recorded in the minutes, reveals the truly generous and liberal spirit of the Willmar church. When the first meeting house was being built, in the early part of 1880, an inexpensive building erected in a couple of months, it was decided that the new church should be opened also to preachers of other denominations, the only stipulation being, that such should be known to work for the salvation of sinners. This was characteristic Baptist religious liberty in practice, a spirit that has characterized the church throughout all the years since.[23]

Moreover, without sacrifice and hard work on the part of the pioneer preacher the early church, of any period and any land, could not have survived. August Olson, who at the ripe old age of eighty-seven recently passed to his eternal reward, became pastor of the Willmar church in 1883. In a letter to the church at the Fiftieth Anniversary he wrote:

> Soon after the Minnesota Conference held in St. Paul, 1883, a united call to serve the Lake Elizabeth and the Willmar churches was extended to me. In this call no salary was guaranteed, but I was promised clothing and board. This call was accepted. Brother Nordberg, then pastor in Grove City, helped me to fill out an application for aid from the State Convention,

---

[21] Ibid., p. 6. [22] Ibid., p. 6. [23] Ibid., p. 8.

> but nothing ever came of this. And so we had to go on as best we could. Food I obtained in almost all the homes, but the clothing came rather sparingly, and to drive sixteen miles a week with a small pony loaned me by brother Winblad frequently took me six hours each way, often in deep mud and snow. Oh, how I froze! I have often wondered if the missionaries ever had a harder time of it on the foreign fields.[24]

Today the children of the pioneers of Willmar, in the second, third and fourth generation, as they continue to build upon the good spiritual foundation laid by the fathers, worship God in a commodious and beautiful temple, erected in 1909. The influence of the Baptists, both in the city and in the surrounding rural district, is of a constructive and wholesome spiritual nature. To the south of Willmar there is the Blomkest church which was formed in 1876; and a few miles to the west, Kerkhoven started in 1895, and the Benson church, which recently affiliated with the Minnesota Conference.

Who can honestly say that no group of believers, even the smallest and most insignificant church, is without importance! The Greenleaf church, located on the prairie southeast of Willmar and organized in 1879, hardly ever reached a membership of more than a score of souls. Here it was, however, that a family of children were reared in the nurture of the Lord, who were predestined to become active lay leaders among Swedish Baptists. The Nicholson sons and daughters, several of whom became members of the Bethlehem Church of Minneapolis, have exerted a Christian influence which has reached far beyond the local field and into a wider denominational and Kingdom work. The beloved Baptist physician, the late Doctor Elmer Nicholson of Seattle, who was well known and appreciated by Conference Baptists everywhere, and especially in the Pacific Northwest, found Christ, together with his brothers and sisters, in the Greenleaf church. Very naturally it was a God fearing home at its best, with a family altar and daily devotions, which became productive of such great spiritual blessings to many far and wide.[25]

Ever since the early days of colonial history land hunger had been a potent factor in the migrations and development of the North American continent. Minnesota was no exception. Attracted by reports of fertile prairie land in the southwestern part of the state, after the Indian disturbance had been quelled, some Scandinavians were found among the early settlers about Worthington in the year 1870.[26] The following year, when the railroad was projected through these regions, several Swedish railroad workers who observed the fertility of the country, took opportunity to file for homesteads. In 1872 people arrived from many different places — Minneapolis, Wisconsin, Village Creek, Iowa, and some directly from Sweden. By this influx the new settlement grew in a very short time into a large community.[27]

---

[24] Cited in *Fifty Years,* First Baptist Church, Willmar, pp. 8–9.

[25] "A Beloved Physician" *Advance 1948,* pp. 41–45

[26] *Fiftieth Anniversary History,* Swedish Baptist Church, Worthington, Minnesota, 1873–1923, p. 7

Most of these settlers were nominal Lutherans, but a few of them were Baptists. That was especially true of the group that came from Village Creek, Iowa, where a Swedish Baptist church had existed since 1853. These Baptist believers felt the need of spiritual edification and the fellowship with others who by experience knew of the joy of salvation. They met for devotions at cottage prayer meetings, and with the singing of hymns, Scripture reading, prayers, and testimonies edified themselves in their most holy faith.[28] However, the need for more effective work by means of a church organization soon became apparent. This took place May 14, 1873, when seven persons met at the home of A. O. Lofstedt and formed the Swedish Baptist Church of Worthington.[29] Seven weeks later the little group of immersed believers had increased to twelve members.

The Church at Worthington has a very interesting history, full of human appeal. Here the American frontier presented both its worst and its best features. An inclement nature in the form of frequent blizzards on the prairie (see Ch. Five) caused much suffering and extreme hardship for the early pioneers in southwestern Minnesota. And the invasion of grasshoppers devouring every green blade of grass on the ground was a scourge that lasted for four years.[30] Only men of the type of "Giants in the Earth," men with patience, endurance and faith could have stood the test. Such were the early settlers of Worthington. And they were not disappointed. After years of toil and sacrifice they had the privilege of harvesting abundant crops with hardly a failure.

Spiritual harvests also yielded rich and bountiful returns throughout the years. In the midst of the grasshopper plague with its resultant hardship and suffering, the Worthington settlement was visited with a sweeping revival of religion. It came in the spring of 1875. Being without a regular preacher, the Baptist church had sent for Pastor Shogren from Village Creek, Iowa, to assist in a series of meetings.

---

[27] Ibid., p. 9

[28] Ibid., p. 9

[29] Ibid., p. 9. In a letter to *Zions Wakt,* July, 1875 A. O. Lofstedt states that the church was organized May 11, 1873, with 11 charter members. See also *Svenska Standaret,* June 18, 1913, at the 40th Anniversary of the church.

[30] *Anniversary History,* op. cit. pp. 21–31.

After a week on the road, a distance of 275 miles, and having been snowbound in several places, he finally arrived in Worthington. Word was sent around that Pastor Shogren would preach at the sod house of a Mr. Johnson on Sunday. The room was packed with people eager to listen. At the close of the meeting the people were asked if they wanted the services to continue through the week. Every hand went up. No kind of weather could keep these pioneers away. Many of them walked for miles to get to the meeting place. Before the end of the week a great revival broke out. Tears, confessions, and prayers became the order of the hour. The meetings continued for more than a month, and the work of grace went on until nearly everyone in the whole community rejoiced in a new life in God.[31]

The matter of church affiliation now naturally arose. Should the new converts seek fellowship with the small Baptist church? This, of course, brought the question of baptism to the fore. In the experience of conversion the Word of God had been the norm and deciding factor. With such background it was but natural that many of the converts would seek for guidance in the sacred Scriptures in regard to baptism and church membership.[32] No outside influence was brought to bear on anyone. The Word of God did its own work. The result was that a large number, between thirty and forty persons, requested to be buried with Christ in baptism. A young man, Frank Peterson, who from the very beginning of the church was considered the natural leader of the Baptist believers and who had been the moving human spirit in the revival, was now unanimously chosen to serve in the administration of baptism. The entire community turned out to witness the immersion, which was the first New Testament baptism west of Lake Crystal.[33] That same year, the year of the great revival, the church erected a small meeting house on the thirteen acres of land which they had acquired, located about seven miles southeast of the present city of Worthington. The dedication was an event never to be forgotten by the pioneers. How they looked with pride on those gothic windows and those paneled doors! Many a costly and imposing edifice has not been dedicated with more joy and appreciation than was the humble building on the Worthington prairies.[34] An addition to the original building was finished in 1889, when the Swedish Baptist Conference held its annual meeting there. The beautiful temple in which the sons and daughters of the pioneers worship God at present was built in 1907.[35]

---

[31] Ibid., p. 43

[32] Ibid., p. 45. *Zions Wakt,* July 1875

[33] *Anniversary History,* op. cit., p. 45

[34] Ibid., pp. 47–48. *Zions Wakt,* July, 1875.

The blizzards and the grasshoppers and the great revival are facts of much interest in the Worthington history. It is safe to say, however, that it was the young administrator of the first baptism who was destined to introduce the Worthington church to the rest of the denomination. Frank Peterson had come in 1872 with his brother and other settlers from Village Creek, Iowa, in order to seek new homes on the fertile Minnesota prairie. Having been a Baptist for some years and with extraordinary talents for leadership, he became as a matter of course the recognized leader of the little Baptist church from the very beginning. The converts needed spiritual care and guidance and the church a pastor. It was in this dilemma that Frank Peterson received his call to the ministry.[36]

Young Peterson, who had served the community as schoolmaster and who had in mind to study law, changed his course and became a preacher. For a few years he ministered successfully to the Baptist people of Worthington, until the First Swedish Baptist Church of Minneapolis claimed him and he pressed on to the front ranks of Swedish Baptists as one of their most brilliant and distinguished leaders.

Other servants of God continued the gospel ministry in Worthington, and the church developed, by means of an active missionary out-reach, into one of the strongest rural churches of the denomination.

In the southwestern part of Minnesota there were two other Swedish Baptist churches, organized while the country was still frontier territory. Some forty miles to the north of Worthington is the *Lake Sarah* community where Swedes began to settle about 1875. Here, as elsewhere, land hunger and the hunger for God went hand in hand. In homes and schoolhouses the people met for divine worship in which they were led by some of the more gifted men in the group. Andrew Swartz, pastor at Worthington, 1888–1890, was invited to the home of John Ekman, one of the early settlers, to preach the gospel. During his repeated visits, a large number of the people turned to the Lord. Six of these were baptized in Lake Shetek in 1888, and, together with John Ekman, joined the Baptist Church of Worthington. The following year, however, the baptized believers at Lake Sarah realized that the time was ripe to effect an organization of their own. This took place June 2, 1889. From the very beginning the church had a will to live. The membership grew in number. In 1892 several persons in the settlement turned to the Lord and fifteen followed Him in baptism, including a young man by the name of John C. Johnson, who later became a forceful preacher of the gospel among Swedish Baptists. A sweeping revival visited the Lake Sarah Church in 1915, with a resultant large addition to the church.[37] Throughout the years the gospel light has continued to shine with increasing strength, at home and abroad, from this center in southwestern Minnesota.

---

[35] *Anniversary History,* op. cit., p. 48

[36] Ibid., p. 45

The Russell Church is located a few miles northwest of Lake Sarah. It was organized June 18, 1889, only a few days after the founding of the Lake Sarah church. Originally this congregation was known as Coon Creek, changing the name in 1894 to Burchard. In 1930, after all its work had been located at Russell, the church again changed its name, now assuming the name of the Russell Baptist Church. The records of the Russell church contain the following interesting statement: "This church has never experienced a great revival nor any destructive doctrinal controversies."[38] Nevertheless, due to the loyalty of the small group of believers, the light has never gone out. This church is still, and with greater determination than ever, pointing the way to the Father's house.

In the northwest area of Minnesota the Swedish Baptists had started work in Fergus Falls as early as 1870 (see Ch. Eight). About a decade later Alexandria, Brainerd, and St. Cloud became important centers of Baptist activity. *Alexandria,* located about one hundred forty miles northwest of Minneapolis, is the county seat in Douglas county, which with its many lakes, hills, and valleys, is one of the most picturesque counties in the whole state. Here a group of Swedes had settled in the early fifties. The Baptists however, were slow in getting a foothold. A. A. Linné, who for a short time traveled as missionary in the Northwest, reached Alexandria in the summer of 1880. He was the first Swedish Baptist minister in this area. Several responded to the gospel message and believed and were baptized. This was probably the first New Testament baptism in this area and took place in Lake Geneva in the summer of 1888.[39] On July 2, 1881, fourteen immersed believers formed the Swedish Baptist Church of Alexandria.[40]

---

[37] *Twenty-fifth Anniversary History* (MS) of Lake Sarah Baptist Church, 1889–1914, pp. 2–4.

[38] Records (MS) of the Russell Baptist Church

[39] P. Ryden, *Svenska Baptisternas Minnesota Historia,* 1850–1918, p. 105.

[40] *Sixty Year Jubilee History,* First Baptist Church, Alexandria, Minnesota, 1881–1941, p. 1. See also *Svenska Standaret,* August 9, 1916, p. 8.

Martin Dahlquist, one of the faithful pioneer preachers of Minnesota, became the first pastor of the church, beginning his service in the spring of 1882. By 1885 the membership had reached 40. Services were held both in the city and in the surrounding country district. The next pastor, Ernest Hallgren, 1887–1891, proclaimed the word in great simplicity and in a very sympathetic spirit. The older people referred to that period as "the good old days" and the blossoming time of the church. Statistics also prove these sayings; for the membership more than trebled during these years.[41] In a spirit of great sacrifice the believers went to work and erected a church building which is still being used, although remodeled twice. It was dedicated in the fall of 1888. True to the genius and nature of Christianity, the Alexandria church considered it both a duty and a privilege to evangelize the neighboring territory. As a result of these efforts a church was organized in Reynolds, some twenty miles to the east of Alexandria, in the year of 1896, and in 1901 a church was formed in Holmes City. This one, however, later dissolved and reunited with the mother church. The church at Clotho came into existence in 1942, as a missionary outgrowth of the Reynolds Church. At the turn of the century "the Canada fever" gripped many of the believers in Alexandria, and they migrated to Midale, Saskatchewan, where they started a Swedish Baptist church in 1903.[42] The successors to the pioneer preachers of Alexandria have each one of them rejoiced in seeing fruit of their labors. A strong and well organized Baptist congregation holds the fort for Christ in this tourist city of the northwest.

Brainerd, the county seat of Crow Wing County, is situated on the Mississippi River, one hundred and forty miles northwest of Minneapolis. Its chief industry is the large Northern Pacific railroad shops. In 1881 the city had a population of between five and six thousand, including one thousand Scandinavians.[43]

Sent by the American Baptist Home Mission Society, John Fogelstrom came here in the fall of 1881 and found eight American Baptists and five Swedish Baptists. In real pioneer fashion and with a strong faith in God and the future, he set about to raise money for a meeting-house even before there was an organized congregation. By March, 1882 he had received pledges to the amount of three hundred dollars, and two lots worth about two hundred dollars.[44] In the face of great opposition and ridicule from another denomination, Fogelstrom and his five Swedish Baptists went to work and started to build.

---

[41] *Sixty Years History,* op. cit. p. 2.

[42] Ibid., pp. 3–4.

[43] *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* 1882, p. 93

[44] Ibid., p. 93

In the meanwhile the spiritual building was not neglected. As a result of proclaiming the gospel, souls turned to Christ in repentance and faith and followed the Master in baptism. Nineteen immersed believers united themselves to form a church August 20, 1882.[45] Their small sanctuary was dedicated for divine service the following November. Fogelstrom raised the money, bought the material and himself supervised the work. One of the city papers expressed it thus, "We believe Mr. Fogelstrom has seen every nail that has been driven into its walls."[46] By 1901 the group of believers had increased to one hundred fifteen members, and, though not economically prosperous, their faith in God led them to erect a new church building at a cost of $6,000. It was dedicated August 20, 1901. Only a few months later, January 24, 1902, fire destroyed this building. Not discouraged, however, the Swedish Baptists of Brainerd set to work immediately to rebuild the sanctuary, a more commodious and costly temple, which was ready for use in January, 1903.[47] In 1950 the Brainerd church had a second baptism of fire which laid the building in smoking ruins. But like their forefathers forty-eight years earlier, the intrepid people began immediately to erect a new structure. A retarding factor, no doubt, to a healthy growth and development, here as in so many other churches, is the frequent changes of pastors. The average length of the pastorates in the Brainerd church is not quite three years. Nevertheless, it has pleased the Head of the church to bless the work of the saints, and the membership now is near the two hundred mark. Moreover, the Brainerd church became instrumental in organizing a congregation in Pillager August 28, 1897. Furthermore, at least some of the Swedish Baptists who constituted a church in Deerwood June 1, 1884, came from Brainerd.

The first Swedes to settle in *St. Cloud* arrived in 1870. They were attracted to the place by the rich opportunities for work which the stone quarries offered. A former pastor of the Swedish Baptist church of St. Cloud complained that the hearts of the people had become as hard as the granite which is being mined in the surrounding mountains. Furthermore, the fact that the Catholics have one of their great strongholds in St. Cloud makes it rather stony soil for the Baptists.

---

[45] Ibid., p. 212. *History of the Swedish Baptist Church of Brainerd* (MS), p. 2.

[46] *Evangelisk Tidskrift*, 1882, p. 282.

[47] Records of Swedish Baptist Church of Brainerd

In the early eighties some Baptists had come from Ishpeming, Michigan, and a few directly from Sweden. These formed a congregation of nine charter members, November 29, 1882. Michael Johnson, pioneer lay preacher, became the first pastor and served the church for seven years, during which time he received into the membership of the church not less than 117 persons.[48] A church building was erected in 1886. Throughout the years, under the leadership of a group of faithful pastors, the St. Cloud church experienced a growth in membership, even though somewhat slow. The progress has been made more by means of a quiet work of grace than by any sweeping revivals. The membership in 1951 was 77.

Other churches in the northwest area organized before or shortly after the turn of the century are: Anoka, 1887; Henning, 1887; Cushing, 1908, and Becker, 1909.

DULUTH AND THE IRON RANGE

Duluth, being located at the western end of Lake Superior, was first permanently settled in 1853, and takes its name from Daniel de Grecylon du Luth, a French explorer from Canada, who in company with seven others visited the vicinity in the fall of 1680. Nearly two hundred years later, in 1857, a small town had grown up in the place, and in 1870, with a population of 3,000, it was incorporated as a city. Since then its growth has been very rapid, being now well over the one hundred thousand mark and the third largest city in Minnesota. Duluth has a natural harbor, nine miles long and two miles wide, and ranks among the leading shipping points in the United States. The city is built on steep hillsides descending abruptly to Lake Superior, and has been said to be thirty miles long, one mile wide and one mile high.

It was only natural that the descendants of the early Vikings should be attracted to this place with its characteristic Nordic climate and topography. In the early eighties, when Swedish Baptists began to locate in Duluth, the city had a population of about four thousand, a large proportion of which were Swedes. Here Baptists, together with other evangelical denominations, found congenial soil for the propagation of the gospel. For after only a few years Duluth had three Swedish Baptist churches and one Swedish Finnish Baptist church, all cooperating in spirit and in purpose.

---

[48] See Records of Swedish Baptist Church of St. Cloud. Also, *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* 1882, p. 282. *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Dec. 10, 1907. *Baneret,* Dec. 1907. Ryden, op. cit pp. 204–206.

Temple Church, Duluth

The Temple (First Swedish) Baptist Church was organized with fourteen charter members March 23, 1884. Frank Peterson, of Minneapolis, had come up to Duluth to assist in the organization. In characteristic Baptist fashion it was expressly stated that the church in all things should have the Word of God as its constitution and only rule in faith and practice. In regard to admission and dismission of members, particular care was to be exercised to make sure a faithful adherence to the New Testament pattern.[49] The first baptism of two believers was solemnized by Frank Peterson, most likely at the same time as the church was organized. A few weeks later, April 27, 1884, Olof Bodien, who at that time was Sunday school missionary in Minnesota, immersed four other converts.[50] Even in those early days it was evident that Duluth was to yield rich harvests in Swedish Baptist work. After two months, or by June 1, 1884, the membership had exactly doubled.

The forerunner in the line of some twelve talented and successful pastors, who have served the Temple Church, was a mere youth, aged twenty-three, by the name of Eric Halvarson. He was graduated from the Seminary with the class of 1884, and began his work in Duluth on the 1st of June. Under the leadership of the young pastor, who was an aggressive pioneer worker, a fiery and warm-hearted soul winner, and a wise and able organizer, the church succeeded in laying a good and enduring foundation for future work. The membership increased from twenty-seven to sixty-four within the space of nine months, and the following organizations took form: A Sunday school, a young men's society, a ladies' mission circle, a young ladies' club. A lot was purchased, and preparations were made for the building of a meetinghouse.[51]

In a letter to Nya Wecko-Posten, Eric Halvarson sounded a hopeful note regarding the Baptist prospects in Duluth.

> Since long before Christmas we have experienced a quiet revival. Even backsliders have been restored. The Lord has blessed us with forty-three new members since my arrival here nine months ago. A year ago we had sixteen members, and now we have sixty-four. Our hearts are overflowing with praise unto Him who gave His life a ransom for all. . . . Trials have also come, but they have turned out to the furtherance of the gospel. Even in a saloon they have honored us by pasting one of our tracts on baptism,

---

[49] *Minnesskrift,* 1884–1924, Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Duluth, Minnesota, pp. 18–20

[50] Ibid., p. 20

[51] Ibid., p. 21

and the saloon-keeper's preaching on, or against, the Baptists has had good effects. Thanks to everyone, be he priest or saloon-keeper, who preaches on the subject of baptism.[52]

In the erection of houses of worship, the Temple Church has displayed much practical wisdom and good common sense. Their first meetinghouse was built in 1887. It was a spacious building and served the congregation for twenty-two years. Gradually it became apparent, however, that larger quarters would be necessary in order to accommodate the crowds that desired to worship God in the Temple Church. In 1909 lots were purchased for a new sanctuary at Twenty-second Avenue West and Third Street. This building was dedicated to the Lord for divine service on August 21, 1910. The celebrations in connection with the dedication became mountain top experiences in the history of the church. Three leading Swedish Baptist preachers — Frank Peterson, Olof Bodien, and G. Arvid Hagstrom — shared in the program of that joyous occasion. Without doubt this edifice is one of the finest church buildings in the whole Conference. A Sunday school plant with four large assembly rooms and eight classrooms was added in 1934. The church now could provide individual classrooms for the entire Sunday school as well as assembly rooms for each department. It is only fair to assume that without the wise and aggressive leadership of Pastor Linus Johnson, who is considered a specialist in religious education, this practical and valuable addition to the church property could not have become a reality.

The Temple Church of Duluth became unusually prolific in establishing other churches. At least six other churches owe their origin, either directly or indirectly, to the activity of the Temple Church, namely, Bethel, Bethany, and Ebenezer, Duluth; Superior and Lake Nebagamon, Wisconsin; and Cloquet, Minnesota. This extraordinary success finds its explanation both in the missionary passion of the mother church and in the constant flux of the population. The membership statistics from the early nineties indicate the shifting nature of Swedes in Duluth. Christopher Silene served the Temple Church as pastor, 1890–1895. In the fourth year of his charge the church celebrated its tenth anniversary, on which occasion it was reported that within the space of four years not less than 86 persons had been added to the membership by means of letter of transfer, and 62 members, during the same period, had moved their membership to other churches.

[52] *Nya Wecko-Posten,* April 22, 1885.

Through frequent revivals, the Temple Church grew strong both in membership and spiritual power and influence. In the winter of 1890, Amanda Yman, at that time a prominent evangelist among Swedish Baptists, came to Duluth. Large crowds flocked to hear the attractive lady preacher, and many repented and believed in the Lord. Throughout the years the church was blessed with pastors of great leadership and pulpit power, and some also especially talented as evangelists. The first year of the ministry of J. Alfred Erikson, who served from 1917 to 1924, became a banner year in the history of the Temple Church. A revival that year added 77 new members to the congregation, and during his term of seven years, there was a total of 256 additions to the membership.[53] At present the membership has passed the four hundred mark, and the Temple Church ranks fifth in order of the Conference churches in Minnesota.

Bethel Church, Duluth

In the Fiftieth Anniversary History of the Bethel Church there is related an exceedingly appealing story of hardship, heroic sacrifices and glorious victory, one difficult to match in any group of believers.[54] The origin of this church dates back to the early part of 1890. Several of the members of the Temple Church had moved to the east end of Duluth and desired to have a place closer home where they might worship God. Their desire took concrete form on April 11, 1890, when thirty-one believers banded themselves together to form the Bethel Baptist Church. The following October, A. G. Holm came from Soudan, Minnesota, to take up the work as the first pastor.

In the summer of 1891, after much planning and deliberation, the small but forward looking church set about to erect a house of worship, which was dedicated in November the same year.[55] The cost of the building, including the lot, amounted to nearly ten thousand dollars. It would appear that this was too heavy a financial load for the size of the congregation. The economic depression of the middle nineties aggravated a most difficult situation. After a period of some ten years of the most heroic sacrifices, the church finally succeeded in clearing up the debt and the building was secure.

The leading factors in this struggle for existence of the Bethel

---

[53] Minnesskrift, op. cit., pp. 31–32. See also Temple Baptist Church Golden Jubilee, 1884–1934; Sixtieth Anniversary, Temple Baptist Church, 1884–1944; *Nya Wecko-Posten,* April 11, 1894; *Svenska Standaret,* April 29, 1914.

[54] Fiftieth Anniversary, Bethel Baptist Church, Duluth, Minn., 1890–1940, pp. 4–6.

[55] Ibid., pp. 5–6.

Church deserve recording. In the spring of 1892 the youthful and talented Magnus Larson took up the work as pastor of the church. Under his aggressive leadership the congregation made good progress. On the first anniversary of his ministry he reported a membership addition of forty-three, and he concluded his report with the following optimistic and truly prophetic statement: "The time will come when the Bethel Baptist Church in Duluth shall occupy a prominent place among our Swedish Baptist churches of the country."[56] The prediction, as is well known to Conference Baptists, has been fully verified in the later growth and development of the Bethel Church. However, the way to victory was the way of suffering. A debt of over six thousand dollars, and that in the midst of depression years when many were out of work, was indeed a most serious problem, especially for a small group of not quite one hundred members. Pastor Larson appealed to John D. Rockefeller for one thousand dollars, and received half of that amount. This brought some relief but not sufficient to cause a material improvement. The church found it impossible to meet the interest payments. On the 16th of January, 1897, the building was sold as a mortgage foreclosure. In addition to those discouraging circumstances, Pastor Larson resigned and left at the beginning of 1897.[57] The prospects, indeed, looked very dark!

It must have required great faith on the part of F. Linden of Superior, Wisconsin, to accept a call to the Bethel Church at that time. He was an excellent preacher, and the meetings were well attended, but the financial difficulties appeared to grow more desperate. In August of 1898 the trustee records show that it was necessary to sell to Albert Stoltz, one of the generous supporters of the church, the pulpit, pulpit chairs, other chairs, books, a clock and a table, in order to pay the janitor who had not been paid for months. This obligation to Stoltz was later cancelled by him.[58] Later in the same year negotiations were made with the mortgage holder and sufficiently liberal terms were agreed upon to enable the church to pay up the debt in five years. It was a day of great rejoicing when the last remaining indebtedness was paid in 1904 and the church could report a building free of encumbrance.[59]

Out of the fiery trials of early years the Bethel Church has emerged spiritually healthy and strong. Under the wise leadership of able pastors, the membership has constantly increased. In work among children and young people, as well as in world-wide missionary endeavors, the Bethel Church of Duluth ranks among the first in the Conference Baptist fellowship. On December 16, 1924, a daughter church of Bethel was organized at Grand Marais, and in the fall of 1950, largely through the efforts of pastor and people of Bethel, a church was formed at Two Harbors, Minnesota.

---

[56] Ibid., p. 6.
[57] Ibid., p. 6.
[58] Ibid., p. 7.
[59] Ibid., p. 8.

Bethany Church, Duluth

The origin of the Bethany Church of Duluth is an evident proof of the missionary spirit that prevailed among the Swedish Baptist pioneers who were anxious to spread the gospel and plant new churches on the frontier. The latter part of the eighties and the first two years of the nineties were prosperous years in West Duluth, and many Swedish immigrants settled there during that period. Among them were a number of Baptists. As there was no Swedish Baptist church in West Duluth, they joined the Temple Church (First Swedish) of that city. It was difficult, however, for them to maintain regular church attendance, as the only means of transportation was either by foot or by train, and the train schedules were not arranged to accommodate church goers. The Temple Church recognized this difficulty as well as the need of opening up a mission in West Duluth. A beginning was made in 1890. This was not an easy assignment, but Christopher Silene, who was then pastor of the Temple Church, was not afraid of difficulties and hard work. After his morning service he would hurry home to snatch a quick meal and then rush down to the depot to board a train for West Duluth and hold a service for the members and friends[60] there. As was the case in many other places also, the Sunday school and the Ladies Aid became the first concrete results of the early missionary efforts. Both of these organizations were formed in the fall of 1890. A number of souls turned to the Lord and followed Christ in baptism. It was a day of great rejoicing on August 24, 1892, when seventeen immersed believers were united in the fellowship of a Swedish Baptist Church of West Duluth. Under the leadership of the first pastor, Isak Hedberg, the Bethany Church, as it was later called, experienced a time of wonderful growth in membership and much spiritual blessing. Before the end of 1894 over a hundred members had been admitted into the church. A meetinghouse was erected and ready for use by July, 1893.

---

[60] *The Book of Memories,* Bethany Baptist Church, Duluth, Minn., 1892–1942, p. 22.

Days of trial, however, were in the offing. The years during "The Panic of 1893" until well into 1897 were hard and uncertain. Practically all the factories, iron works, shops and other business establishments were caught in the financial crash and were virtually wiped out. Many of the people moved to other parts of the country where work was more plentiful. Those who were left had a hard time trying to make a living for their families and carry on the work of the church.[61] Finally the load became too heavy, and in November, 1895, the congregation decided to sell the building for whatever it would bring. The old pioneers, however, were unwavering in their faith, and hardships and setbacks like this only served to make the promises of God stand out more clearly. They were assured that the Lord of the church would provide means to carry on His work. And so He did, for just when it seemed to be the darkest, help was near at hand. About the time when the church decided to sell the building, the Baptist Union of Duluth made them an offer to buy the property on 59th Avenue West and Ramsey Street, the present site of the church. The price was set at four hundred dollars, which was accepted, and in February, 1896, the Bethany Church moved into its new home.[62]

From then on steady progress was made. Little by little the old debts were paid up, and by 1902 the church became self-supporting, having up to that time received some aid from the Conference. A number of members had moved some twenty-five miles south of Duluth, where they held services and established a mission. On January 27, 1903, twenty-eight of these members were given letters of transfer, and organized a Swedish Baptist church at Sandy Lake.[63] C. A. Aldeen's ministry, 1899–1907, became especially fruitful in laying a good foundation for future growth and development. He started a summer Bible school (Daily Vacation Bible School) for children, and also a pastor's class of religious instruction for boys and girls.[64] Since it is only in recent years that churches in general have realized the important place of religious education, it is evident that the Bethany pastor was well in advance of his own times in this respect.

A building program which involved the rebuilding of the auditorium and the adding of a number of class rooms to the constantly growing Sunday school was launched in 1926. The dedication was held on October 24. It was a period of jubilee for the Bethany

---

[61] Ibid., p. 23.

[62] Ibid., p. 23. Ryden, op. cit. p. 138. *Svenska Standaret,* Oct. 25, 1917, contains a 25th Year *History* of the Bethany Church, which is quite complete.

[63] Memories. op. cit., p. 24.

[64] Ibid., p. 24.

Church, both by reason of material progress and also because of spiritual blessings and growth in membership. About a year later, as a bolt from the blue, came unexpected and sad news. On the morning of December 28, 1927, most of the members were awakened by telephone calls telling them that their church, which had just been rebuilt and refurnished, had been destroyed by fire. The interior, entirely new and of the latest in church furnishings, was a total loss. Stunned as they must have been by this calamity, the courageous Bethany people made plans immediately, even before the smoldering embers had cooled, to rebuild their sanctuary.[65] In April, 1928, they moved in under their own roof again, and there have continued throughout the years to proclaim the gospel.

The Iron Range

In its output of iron ore, Minnesota far outranks all the other states, and contributes both in quantity and value considerably more than half of the iron ore produced and marketed in the United States. By far the largest part of the production is from the Mesabi Range, now the most important iron-producing district in the world. The Vermillion Range, although much smaller in production and capacity, was opened several years earlier than the Mesabi Range. In the Iron Range district proper there are three Swedish Baptist churches: Soudan, Eveleth, and Virginia, and in the area a few miles to the north there are three more churches: Cook, Leander, and East Little Fork.

Soudan

Soudan is located approximately one hundred miles north of Duluth on the eastern shore of beautiful Lake Vermillion. In less than three years after the opening of the mines, some two hundred Swedes, among others, had settled and found profitable employment in the Soudan area.[66] Among these was a group of immersed believers who had come, most of them, from the same place in the province of Östergötland, Sweden. Assisted by Allfrid Sjolander, at that time pastor of the Bethel Church, Duluth, six of these converted Swedes organized a Baptist church in Soudan, May 28, 1886.[67] For a few years the church prospered and the future seemed bright. In 1888 a meetinghouse was erected, eleven believers were immersed, and the following year twenty-six new members were added to the church.

---

[65] Ibid., p. 24.

[66] Letter by Alf. Sjolander, *Nya Wecko-Posten,* June 9, 1886.

[67] Records Soudan Baptist Church.

The depression in the middle nineties, however, caused a reaction. As the mines reduced their operation, many were thrown out of work and had to move elsewhere. For some twenty-five years or more, the Swedish Baptist church of Soudan had a precarious existence. But the few members who remained did not fail to let their light shine. A Sunday school was maintained, as well as other services. In the summer of 1936, when the church celebrated its fiftieth anniversary, the community experienced a revival[68] which added new members to the group and brought fresh life to the whole organization. It was the good seed planted by the pioneers that now yielded a rich harvest. In membership never large, the Soudan Baptist church has nevertheless made a permanent and far reaching contribution to the kingdom of God in the world. Of one of the charter members, J. A. Nordstrom, it was said, "He was an ordinary miner, but an extraordinary Christian." At his untimely death at the age of thirty-eight, one of his unconverted fellow miners made this statement, "If anyone ever was a Christian, Nordstrom surely was one."[69] A. G. Sandblom, the aggressive home missionary and thought-provoking writer, was a son of the Soudan church. As a pioneer missionary, he labored with much success in northern Minnesota, Utah, and Oregon.

Eveleth and Virginia

In the fall of 1890 two Swedish Baptist families, Gust Leander and Theodor Damberg, moved into the large mining center of Eveleth. John Eklund had arrived at about the same time. A little later, others of a like faith joined them. Being eager to spread the gospel, they gathered a group of children and organized a Sunday school. As this work flourished and developed, the need for an organized church became apparent. On February 11, 1900, ten immersed believers formed the Swedish Baptist Church of Eveleth.[70] Of peculiar interest, and indicating in these believers a firm faith in God and the future, is the fact that on the very day that the church was organized it was also decided to erect a meetinghouse, and subscriptions were made amounting to one hundred seventy-five dollars. The house was built and dedicated the following summer.[71] Throughout the years the Eveleth

---

[68] Letter by A. G. Sandblom, *Svenska Standaret,* July 28, 1936.

[69] Letter by A. G. Sandblom.

[70] Records. Eveleth Baptist Church. Ryden, op. cit. p. 143.

[71] Records. Eveleth Baptist Church.

Church has been blessed with wise leadership and has experienced a sound development. This is especially true of the Sunday school which has always held a prominent place in the planning and work of the church.

Situated a few miles from Eveleth and some seventy miles northwest of Duluth, Virginia is one of the largest and more important cities on the Iron Range. The population is cosmopolitan. Practically every state in Europe, and most parts of North America have representatives in this city. It is a typical American melting-pot.[72]

A Swedish Baptist family by the name of Holmer had settled in Virginia, and for some time these friends were practically alone in working and praying for the gospel door to open. Magnus Berglund, for many years Sunday school missionary in Minnesota, and Gust Nygren were the first Baptist preachers to visit the place. By means of tent meetings, conducted by Nygren and the lady missionary Agnes Ostergren (Mrs. A. Gordh), an appeal was made to the Swedish population of the community, with the result that a number repented and believed.[73] Thus the seed planted by a faithful few began to yield a rich spiritual harvest. The result was that a Baptist church was organized November 29, 1903. After only two years this church had the privilege of sending one of her sons, Nels Soneson, into the gospel ministry. In 1917 the evangelist A. Lee Aldrich held a city-wide revival campaign in Virginia. In the religious awakening that followed, the Baptist church experienced a sizeable increase in its membership. That year a new church building replaced the old meetinghouse. The material for the new temple came from the tabernacle that had been constructed for the revival campaign. For its size the Baptist church of Virginia is well organized, and carries on an increasingly effective work for God and His Kingdom.

At Hibbing, one of the greatest mine centers of northern Minnesota, a Conference Baptist church was organized in 1946. The Swedish Finnish Baptist Church of Chisholm has recently joined the Conference.

Cook, East Little Fork, and Leander

It was land hunger, undoubtedly, so typical of people on the American frontier, which caused a group of Swedes, at the turn of the century, to exchange their occupation of mining at Tower and Soudan, for farming farther west. They secured homesteads in the area which is now known as Cook, about twenty-five miles north of

---

[72] Ryden, op. cit. pp. 227–228.

[73] Letter by M. Berglund, *Svenska Standaret,* June 3, 1930.

Virginia. Fredrik Larson was the first Baptist to settle in the Cook community. He came from Soudan in 1903, where he had been baptized by V. E. Hedberg in the summer of 1896. Inasmuch as he was gifted as a speaker and a leader, and being ever ready to be used by the Lord, he became a source of much blessing to the early settlers. The first Baptist preacher to visit Cook, it is believed, was A. G. Sandblom.[74] The Sunday school missionary C. E. Westin also preached the gospel there in the early years. On Sunday, August 19, 1906, Oscar Svedberg, the pastor in Virginia, came up to Cook and immersed seven believers in Little Fork River.[75] About a year later, August 25, 1907, the church was organized. A neat little meetinghouse was erected and dedicated in 1914. Since Oscar Svedberg made his home in Cook, he willingly ministered to the small church as pastor at various times, especially in the early years. In 1918 Evangelist David Anderson held a series of services in that area, which added nineteen new members to the Cook church.

In the summer of 1897 the first Swedes located in the East Little Fork area, only a few miles east of Cook. Some of these settlers came from Soudan. A few years later a number of Swedish Finns from Chisholm and other places took up homesteads in East Little Fork, and gradually the community became almost entirely Swedish-Finnish in character. As in several other settlements of that region, A. G. Sandblom was the first Baptist preacher to proclaim the gospel in East Little Fork. In the summer of 1909 Andrew Blomquist, who for several years served as missionary among the Swedish-Finnish people, performed the first New Testament baptism in the East Little Fork community. Four believers were immersed, and these, together with six others, formed a Baptist church September 5, 1907.[76] In 1914 a meetinghouse was erected in which the gospel has been proclaimed down through the years. A rather large addition to the little church came by means of a revival in the summer of 1918.

About six miles south of Cook is the Leander community. It was settled mainly by a group of Swedes from the Tower and Soudan districts. This migration started as early as 1894. Several of the newcomers were believers who, very naturally, met for religious worship. Led by John Edblom and J. E. Oberg, they also organized a Sunday school, which in the course of years helped many of the children in the settlement to find Christ. On May 29, 1910, the Leander Baptist Church was organized with seven charter members.[77] Some years later a church building was erected. In 1911 and in 1918, as well as later, the church was blessed with revivals which increased the membership considerably and lifted the spiritual life of the group to a higher level. The three churches — Cook, East Little Fork, and Leander — for many years have been served by the same pastor.

---

[74] Records. Cook Baptist Church.

[75] Ryden. op. cit., p. 124.

[76] Records. East Little Fork Baptist Church. See also *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Sept. 21, 1909, and June 7, 1910.

RED RIVER VALLEY

In the area which is usually considered as the Red River Valley district, there are ten Conference churches. Not all of these, however, are located in the Valley proper, and one, the Drayton church, is situated just across the state line in North Dakota.

In the years 1881 and 1882 there was considerable immigration to the Red River Valley. Many of these migrants were Swedes. Their land hunger, which caused them to seek the wide expanse of the Valley, was destined here to find a complete satisfaction. Not immediately, however. For here as elsewhere on the frontier there was a period of hard work and much sacrifice before the fruitful prairie, the granary of America, would yield its rich returns. The sod house, the typical dwelling, was of the most primitive type. In one of these one-room shelters near Hallock, which served the family as home for fifteen years, a few believers had assembled for a meeting one afternoon in November, 1882. Before the service closed, a typical northwestern blizzard raged on the outside in all its fury. Only one man ventured out in the storm to seek his own home. The others, sixteen in number, spent the night in the sod house, praising God for his tender care and protection.[78] In early years great areas of the Valley were covered with water. A few days before midsummer of 1885 Olof Bodien made his first trip to this part of the state. At Argyle he was met by a farmer who with his ox team and an old lumber wagon brought the preacher to the home ten miles away where he was to spend the first night. Pastor Bodien suggested that a boat would have been more useful and certainly would have provided more riding comfort than the lumber wagon, for the oxen waded knee deep, or more, in water most of the way. His lodging was a one-room shanty, the walls of which were alive with vermin. The kind-hearted mother of the home intimated that it would be more pleasant to sleep on the floor in the vestibule, and here the preacher crawled down in the shape of an S, for the place was too small to permit him to stretch out. This was "the happy pioneer times".[79]

---

[77] Records. Leander Baptist Church. Ryden, op. cit., p. 176.

[78] A. Sisell. *En Missionärs Anteckningar,* Upplevelser på Red Riverdalens fält, pp. 8–8. This pamphlet contains a realistic account of pioneer life and work in the Red River Valley.

Among the early immigrants to the Valley were several believers, and a few professed the Baptist faith. They realized, these pioneers, like believers in all ages, that man does not live by bread alone. There was soul hunger to be satisfied. And thus they assembled in their primitive dwellings to sing the songs of Zion, to pray and to study God's Holy Word. In the course of searching of the Scriptures there naturally would be some who would discern the New Testament teaching concerning the Church. These, together with the few Baptists who had moved in from Sweden, or from other places in America, considered prayerfully the forming of a Baptist church.[80]

There were two Baptist centers in the Valley in the early eighties, with a few adherents to that faith in each place. The first one in point of organized work was located six miles east of Hallock in Kittson county. This one became the present Lancaster church. In the second settlement, some thirty miles to the south, near Stephen in Marshall county, a Baptist church was formed a few weeks later the same summer. The story of the founding of these two churches, the oldest in the Red River Valley, is, briefly, as follows:

In the spring of 1883 A. P. Ekman, the first general missionary of the General Conference, on one of his extended tours north, came to Hallock in the Valley. He was the first preacher ever to visit the Swedish settlement, and he wrote about this experience among his countrymen as follows:

> I found there a small group of Baptists and a few other believers who wept for joy when they heard that I had come to preach the gospel for them. It grieved me not to be able to stay longer with them, but I advised that they invite Martin Dahlquist of Alexandria to make them a visit.[81]

Dahlquist accepted the invitation, and for three days, June 23–25, from early morning till late at night he proclaimed the Word to spiritually hungry hearts. On the 24th of June three happy believers followed Christ in baptism and were immersed in a nearby creek. The following day another person took the same step, and on that day, June 25, 1883, these four, together with three others, organized the first church in the Red River Valley.[82] It was to be known as the Swedish Baptist Church of Hallock, Kittson county. Later the name was changed to Poppleton, and at present the church bears the name of Lancaster. It was significant that the first person to enter the baptismal waters on that occasion was A. Sisell who for a number of years had preached the gospel as a pioneer missionary in the Valley. Olof Duvenberg, one of the four who received baptism that day, served for a long time as pastor of the Lancaster church.

---

[79] Ibid., pp. 13–14.

[80] *Thirty Years History,* MS., of Lancaster Baptist Church.

[81] *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* op. cit., 1883, p. 188.

Having completed his mission in the Hallock settlement, Martin Dahlquist went south to a Swedish community near Stephen, where he found thirteen Baptists and some four or five who desired to be immersed. These friends had not heard a Swedish Baptist preacher since their arrival there two years previously. It is needless to say that their hearts rejoiced at hearing the Word proclaimed. Dahlquist however, could not stay long enough to effect a church organization. About two weeks later, A. A. Linne of Fergus Falls and L. G. Hedlund of Oscar were sent up to the Valley. They preached the gospel to a group of believers on the prairie southeast of Stephen, and on July 9, 1883 they formed a Baptist church of nineteen charter members, five of whom had been immersed the same day. The church was called the Tamarack River Baptist Church,[83] now known as the church of Wanger.

Both of these churches, the first two in the Red River Valley area, have remained comparatively small. Nevertheless they, too, have been used to spread the gospel of light both near and far.

Before the turn of the century five other churches were formed in the Valley: Thief River Falls, 1886; Vega, 1886; Karlstad, 1889; Alma, 1891; and Eagle Point, 1892.

In Thief River Falls, the chief city of the Red River Valley, a Baptist church composed of eight members was formed March 27, 1886. Having several Norwegian members, the church joined the Norwegian Baptist Conference of North Dakota. However, in 1899 it decided to change its fellowship and the church became affiliated with the Swedish Conference. A few years later, in 1907, the name was changed from the Scandinavian Baptist Church at St. Hilaire to the Swedish Baptist Church of Thief River Falls. For many years the church had a precarious existence, putting up a heroic struggle against various isms and other retarding elements. The light of a faithful few, however, was kept steadily burning, and today the immersed believers of Thief River Falls constitute a comparatively strong group who exert a powerful influence upon the whole city.

---

[82] *History,* Lancaster Church, op. cit. Sisell, op. cit., pp. 9–10; *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* 1883, p. 165.

[83] *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* 1883, p. 176. Ryden, op. cit., pp. 229–230. Sissell, op. cit., pp. 10–13.

There is a very interesting story connected with the first pastor of the Vega church. C. Wahlin, who had taken a homestead in town of Vega, some eight miles northwest of Warren, was a farmer preacher among the Mission Covenant people (Missionsvänner). Both he and his wife were happy and hospitable Christians, and A. Sisell, as well as other preachers, often enjoyed the hospitality of the Wahlin home. As a result of conversations concerning the New Testament church and a thorough study of the Scriptures, Wahlin was led to see the important truth of believers' immersion and decided to follow the teachings of the Word in this respect. In order to make the act as impressive as possible, he invited Pastor Olof Bodien to come and immerse him. A few days before midsummer, 1885, Bodien arrived. Apparently there were no obstacles to the baptism, for Wahlin firmly believed that immersion should follow regeneration. Bodien, however, asked the candidate, "What about the church?" "I expect to remain a member in the Mission Covenant church," was Wahlin's reply. "Then," continued Bodien, "I am sorry that I cannot immerse you. The New Testament church knew nothing of infant sprinkling; it was composed only of immersed believers. Search the Scriptures more carefully, and I am sure you will discover the teaching concerning the church." That the baptism did not take place was a great disappointment to both Wahlin and Bodien. However, several other believers obeyed and were immersed.

In the following few months, heeding the admonition of the preacher, Wahlin eagerly pored over the Book, determined to find the truth. When Missionary A. Sisell next came in the month of November, not only Wahlin but also his wife and two other believers in the Vega community were ready for immersion.[84] As they stepped down into the icy water of the river, Wahlin exclaimed with the Ethiopian, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" (Acts 8:36). Truly, the hindrances had all been removed; and C. Wahlin, with a song of praise to God in his heart, emerged from the baptismal waters that day to become a pioneer preacher and leader among the Baptists in the Red River Valley for fully one generation. He served the Vega church as pastor about 28 years, and it was his joy to see scores turn to the Lord and follow Him in baptism. Not without opposition and persecution, to be sure, for many of his former friends, as well as others, considered Baptists dangerous heretics.

---

[84] Sisell, op. cit., pp. 14–18. *Thirty Years History* of the Vega Baptist Church, MS.

The Baptist believers in Vega continued in the fellowship of prayer and the Word. Later on in the winter of 1886 Andrew Nelson of Roseau, a pioneer preacher in Red River Valley as well as in North Dakota, came to Vega. Nelson was a fiery evangelist and a consecrated and self-sacrificing Christian. His habits were simple and his wants few. Privation and poverty he gladly shared with the poor people on the frontier who were hungry for the Bread of Life. Together with Sisell and Wahlin, he was greatly used of God to break the spiritual soil in the Valley. His visit to Vega brought a rich harvest of souls. On the 5th of June, 1886 Wahlin immersed nine of the converts, and a few days later the Vega church was organized,[85] with thirteen charter members, and with C. Wahlin as pastor. It pleased God to add to the church such as were saved. For a long time the Vega church was considered the strongest, both in membership and other resources, in the whole Valley. In fact, the fertile plains yielded such abundant harvests that the farmers, including the Baptists, were among the most prosperous in the whole country. Their type of Christianity however, seemed to have been somewhat deficient in practical aspects, especially in denominational loyalty and missionary out-reach. Under the aggressive leadership of youthful Oscar Boberg, who lived only long enough to minister to the Vega church about three years, 1914–1917, there was a marked increase in denominational consciousness. The same could be said for the other churches in the Valley about that time. The Baptists in Vega were the first in the whole district to erect a house of worship, which was built in 1892.[86] Some twenty-five years ago the main part of the work was moved into the town of Alvarado.

The fifth Swedish Baptist church to be formed in the Red River Valley was the one at Karlstad. A number of Baptists from the Tamarack River settlement had moved north and settled at Deerwood, a community located some miles west of Karlstad. Others of the Baptist faith had moved in from Sweden. On March 10, 1889, fourteen of these immersed believers united themselves together into a Baptist church. It is believed that Andrew Nelson of Roseau was the first to preach the gospel in Deerwood. C. Wahlin, A. Sisell and A. Young also held services there. The latter, who was in charge of the work at Tamarack River, divided his time with the new church at Deerwood. After twelve years of pioneering the church built a meetinghouse in Deerwood, and some years later, in 1909, a place of worship was erected in Karlstad where all the work was gradually located.[87] Of particular interest, according to the records, is the fact that the cost of all their building projects was paid by the Deerwood-Karlstad Baptists, as they went along, thus avoiding going into debt. A commendable policy indeed! The Karlstad church is now the largest in membership in the Red River Valley.

---

[85] The exact date of organization is uncertain because the church has no minutes earlier than 1891. Many of the pioneers, especially in that area, considered it a sign of worldliness to keep any records.

[86] *History,* Vega Baptist Church. *Svenska Standaret,* Nov. 9, 1926.

The Alma church, sixth in order in the Valley, and located near the town of Argyle, was organized with eight charter members February 22, 1891. It was known in early years as the Swedish Baptist Church of Foldahl.[88] For some reason the congregation failed to grow very much and never had a full time pastor. It has been suggested that if the Wanger and Alma churches, situated close together, had merged and moved to the town of Argyle, there might have been a strong Baptist work in the whole area.[89]

Attracted by the glowing America letters written to Sweden about the fertile Red River Valley in the early eighties, among others there were some Baptists from the southern part of the province of Dalarne who emigrated, in 1882, and settled in the western portion of the Valley near the North Dakota border. These immersed believers joined the Tamarack River Church. In the course of years, however, they realized that the distance was too great, and agreed to start a church in their own community. This became a reality November 2, 1892, and the church was named the Eagle Point Swedish Baptist Church. Two brethren of their own group, J. P. Johnson and Erik Erikson, had for a decade been the spiritual leaders in the community, and they continued for many years to break the Bread of Life in the Eagle Point Church. Itinerant preachers, such as Andrew Nelson, A. Sisell, and L. M. Stolberg also ministered to the spiritual needs of the settlers. A meetinghouse was built in 1900, and in 1913 a mission was started across the Red River in Drayton, North Dakota.[90] In July of 1918 this mission was organized into a church.

Roseau County, although not properly a part of the Red River Valley, belongs, nevertheless, as far as Baptist work is concerned, to the same district. Here in the town of Roseau a handful of courageous believers started a Baptist church in 1912. After many years of hard work and waiting, the seed sown began to bear fruit, and a strong, missionary-minded church is now telling redemption's story in that community. Not far from Roseau a new church was founded in 1940 under the name of Palmville-Stafford.

---

[87] *Forty Years History* (MS), Karlstad Baptist Church.

[88] Original Minutes, Alma Church.

[89] Eric Berg. Notes on the Alma Church.

[90] Ryden, op cit., pp. 140–141. Organization Minutes, Eagle Point Baptist Church.

Space forbids to do more than mention in this connection a number of younger churches, located mostly in north central Minnesota, all the way from Mille Lacs Lake in the south to the Canadian border in the north. Opstead, organized 1891; Isle, 1919; Glory, 1945; Hillman, 1926; Jessie Lake, 1911; Battle River, 1915; Rako, 1941; Sand Lake, 1941; Lengby, 1900; and Clearbrook, 1906.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

LATER PIONEER PREACHERS IN MINNESOTA

In two former chapters we have considered the founders and some of the early pioneer preachers, (see Chs. Three and Nine). They were the men who laid a good foundation for Swedish Baptist work in America and continued to build according to the wisdom and strength which God supplied. The task before us here will be to become acquainted with a few of the men of God in Swedish Baptist ranks of Minnesota, who were greatly used in leading the Baptist people to victory for a generation or more, beginning about 1870. In the front ranks of these pioneers, as one of the most typical frontier missionaries, stands

OLAUS OKERSON

He was Minnesota's Swedish Baptist "break-plow," plowing with the gospel plow in a new and difficult field. And he plowed deeply to prepare the field for a great spiritual harvest which still is yielding rich and glorious returns.[1]

Okerson's life story very naturally divides itself into three distinct periods: Sweden, Minnesota, and the Pacific Northwest. He was born in Norra Wram, Skåne, Sweden, February 12, 1836 and, after a life of heroic and hard work, he passed away at McMinnville, Oregon, August 29, 1901. Sweden, like so many other countries, was blessed with great revivals in the middle of the nineteenth century. Such times of spiritual awakening are generally productive of such great leadership in the Christian church as poets, preachers, and missionaries.[2] Young Okerson was touched by God's redeeming love and surrendered himself wholeheartedly to the Lord. He was then twenty years old. Two years later, November 28, 1858, he was immersed and united with the Broby Baptist Church.[3] At that time the Baptists in Sweden were hunted as criminals and they experienced severe persecution for their faith. With a limited education received privately from a local school teacher, Okerson exercised his talents as a teacher of Baptist children. At the same time as he taught school he preached the gospel, and many believed and were baptized through his service. In 1863 he was ordained to the gospel ministry. A year previously, August 8, 1862, he had been united in marriage to Hanna Bodelson.[4]

---

[1] Charles Asplund, Memorial Address delivered at the grave of Olaus Okerson in McMinnville, Ore., on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of his birth, May 16, 1936.

[2] Eric Berg, Life of Olaus Okerson, MS.

[3] A. G. Hall, *Svenska Baptisternas Historia,* 1848–1898, Vol. II, p. 90.

The restrictive religious and economic conditions of Sweden, however, caused Okerson, like so many others in the Old World, to seek freedom in America. In company with a group of fellow-believers, the Okerson family emigrated in the month of May, 1864. The sailing vessel on which they had taken passage was wrecked off the coast of Anticosti Island, near Canada. Nevertheless, the Lord was watching over his servant, and he was rescued, like the apostle Paul, for the purpose of ministering to others.[5] With the characteristic Okerson fashion of restless aggressiveness, he held a prayer meeting the very first evening he spent in St. Paul, Minnesota. That was some time in late August, 1864. The second period in his life had then begun. "It brought to my heart much spiritual joy," he writes, "again to have the privilege to break the Bread of Life to hungry souls."[6] This was several years before there was a Swedish Baptist church in St. Paul.

Scandia, Minnesota, became Okerson's first home in the new world. Being a son of the soil and accustomed to hard work, it was only natural that he should feel perfectly at home on the frontier. The opportunity that farming provided, to be near to mother earth and out in God's open spaces, had a peculiar fascination to this pioneer missionary. Hence it came about that at the time that he tilled the soil of human hearts, he also broke land on the American frontier and partly, at least, supported himself and his family with the toil of his hands. Many of the men in the Scandia settlement had responded to Abraham Lincoln's appeal for volunteers in the Civil War, and Okerson considered it a privilege to lend a hand in the farm work of families where the husband or brothers were out to liberate the negro slaves.[7] That sort of thing was Christianity applied in daily living and became a potent aid in the preaching of the gospel.

Having served in Scandia, in the double capacity of farmer-preacher for about one year, Okerson launched out on his fifteen years' missionary career in Minnesota. On October 1, 1865, he obtained his commission for this service from the American Baptist Home Mission Society of New York. That his restless and adventurous spirit would not suffer him to live long in any place was to be expected. In 1867 he moved with his family to Grove City, where he remained five years. The following four years, 1872–1876, Okerson had his headquarters in Fergus Falls. After a brief excursion out of the state in 1876, during which time he served for ten months as the first pastor of the Swedish Baptist Church at Moline, Illinois, he returned to Minnesota and lived, first in Lake City for six months, and about three years, 1878–1880, in Houston, and Winnebago Valley. From the latter place he moved to Oregon.[8]

---

[4] Berg, op. cit., p. 11.

[5] Asplund, op. cit.,

[6] Hall, op. cit., p. 93.

[7] Berg, op. cit., p. 14.

In Okerson's missionary labors both in Minnesota and on the West Coast there were two dominant factors which appear evident to any student of his life. First, and certainly foremost, was his burning zeal, in season and out of season, to proclaim the gospel, to bring lost souls to Christ and to organize new churches. As a pioneer missionary desperately concerned with the eternal welfare of his fellow men, and as a wise builder and organizer, Okerson has had few equals. The second factor — occasionally he feared that this thing would become an obstacle in his service of the Master — was his native love for the soil and his practical turn of mind which, in several places where he lived, caused him to acquire a small farm, or some other material source of income, in order to supplement his limited salary. For example, in Grove City he took a homestead a short distance north of town where the family lived for five years; in Fergus Falls he bought two blocks of land in town and secured preemption to a tract of land located fifteen miles from the city; and at Houston he possessed some land with a living house which he traded for a flour mill at Winnebago Valley.[9] It seems perfectly clear, however, to the impartial historian that Okerson was not actuated by any mercenary motive. For the material things held a subordinate place in his philosophy of life, and were used only in such a way as to enable him to continue his missionary labors. No other apology is necessary than the abundant spiritual fruit of his work for the Lord.

"By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7:20), was uttered by the Master long ago. Measured by that standard, Olaus Okerson has nothing whereof to be ashamed, either in Minnesota or in the Pacific Northwest. For God blessed this tireless servant with a great harvest of saved souls who were organized into many and strong churches. In Grove City, largely as a result of Okerson's labor, a congregation was organized in 1866, and with his help, ten acres of land were secured from the railroad company, upon which a meeting-house was built. To Fergus Falls he came for the first time in the summer of 1870, and by August 24 of that year was able to organize a church. In addition to his work as pastor of that church, Okerson had twelve other preaching stations which he regularly supplied. Surely, in labor he was more abundant! To summarize, during the fifteen years, 1865–1880, that he traveled as a Minnesota missionary and missionary pastor, he organized or had a share in organizing the following Swedish Baptist churches: Grove City, Cokato, Stanchfield, Lake Elizabeth, Fergus Falls, Evansville, Minneapolis Bethlehem, and Kandiyohi. In that same period, all in all, twenty-six new Swedish Baptist churches were formed in Minnesota, and in 1880 the combined membership of all the churches in the state was 1,402.[10] Those were times of religious awakening, and people on the frontier responded readily to the gospel message. Okerson himself relates:

---

[8] Ibid., pp. 14–21; Hall, op. cit., pp. 93–94.

[9] Berg, op. cit., p. 15–20.

> Wherever we came in those days revivals broke out. Hundreds became believers, and many were immersed. I immersed in lakes and rivers, frequently when the weather was so cold that our clothes froze stiff as soon as we came up from the water on the ice. But the people rejoiced in the Lord and praised Him for a glorious redemption.[11]

To evaluate adequately the life and labor of this missionary, the "break-plow" of the Swedish Baptists in Minnesota, is next to impossible. A man of physical strength and endurance who could withstand the Minnesota winters, he possessed exceptional qualities for his calling. A will to work, a restless spirit,[12] and a deep sense of responsibility to God and man urged him continually on to enter new fields where the gospel of Christ had not been preached. The old timers described Okerson's presence at conferences and similar gatherings as a refreshing storm which would clear the atmosphere. His speech was bold and animated with the fire of enthusiasm, and attracted immediate attention of all.[13] The trackless prairies with terrible blizzards and the deep forests where a traveler easily lost his way, these and many more the dauntless missionary never considered insurmountable barriers in his way to reach the settlers with the saving gospel of Christ.

The third period, the last twenty years of Okerson's life, 1881–

---

[10] Ibid., p. 25. [11] Ibid., p. 21.

[12] *History,* Scandia Baptist Church, 1855–1930, p. 33.

[13] Ryden, op. cit., p. 46.

1901, were spent in the Pacific Northwest, with headquarters in or near Portland, Oregon. However, since the subject of our present discussion is pioneer preachers in Minnesota, it would seem advisable to defer a detailed treatment of his work on the West Coast to a later chapter. A brief sketch here of the main events will suffice.

Having heard that many Scandinavians had moved to Oregon and Washington and that they had no Baptist preacher of their own tongue there, Okerson felt, in 1880, a distinct divine call to go out and preach the gospel among them. So much the more so, since at that time several good preachers were active on the Minnesota field, and he himself, also, had always considered it both his duty and privilege to break new ground in unevangelized territory. With his family he left Minnesota December 29, 1880, reached Omaha after two days, and arrived nine days later in San Francisco. Having spent a week-end there, he came by boat to Portland, Oregon.[14] Immediately he started out to contact his countrymen of whom he found a few in the city, and some, scattered over a wide area, in the deep forest. No sacrifice, however, was too great for this pioneer missionary as he walked along almost impassable roads and paths, over mountains and through valleys, in order to reach people with the gospel of Christ.

The restless missionary, who was also a wise and systematic Kingdom builder, decided to survey the whole Northwest area in order to locate strategic centers for the Swedish Baptist work. With that in view, he pressed on north to Seattle in Washington territory in the spring of 1881. Seattle was then a small town of 3,533 population. Okerson, however, realized that the place had a future. He gathered the few Swedes he could find for a gospel service. Still more, he bought a lot and built a house on it, a house of prayer in Seattle. This was two years before a Scandinavian Baptist church was formed in that city. The same year Okerson made a missionary tour to Tacoma, and there,too, he built a meetinghouse and laid the foundation for permanent Swedish Baptist work. In 1883 he felt that the time had come for a church building in Portland. He secured a city lot and found an old house in another locality which he bought and moved on the lot, rebuilding it into a meetinghouse.

In Seattle and Tacoma the buildings were dedicated free of debt. This was not the case in Portland, however. Okerson, at that time without a salary, having relinquished his support from the Baptist Home Mission Society in favor of two other preachers whom he had secured to care for the work in Seattle and Portland, started out in the winter of 1883–1884 on a tour east to raise funds for his beloved work on the west coast. He returned with two thousand dollars, sufficient to pay the remaining balance on the Portland property.[15] In two years, three meetinghouses, all free of debt! Surely, God honored the faith of this servant! The wisdom of erecting church buildings in places before there was any organized work may be questioned. Okerson, however, was a man of daring faith and constructive action. He attempted great things for God. And he was not put to shame. In the three strategic centers which he selected — Portland, Seattle, and Tacoma — churches were organized in the following order: Seattle 1883, Portland 1884, and Tacoma 1885. These churches are today among the strongest of Conference Baptist churches.

---

[14] *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* 1881, pp. 58–59. See also Benson, R., *Svenska Baptisternas Verksamhet på Västkusten,* pp. 21–24.

As Okerson was now without a salary to support himself and his family, he had to find some other way to make his livelihood. On the outskirts of Portland he secured twenty acres of land and started a dairy farm. This really terminated his active missionary labors. In 1886 he moved to a larger farm at McMinnville, which, due to sickness in the family, he later exchanged for a smaller place in McMinnville where the Okersons lived until God called his faithful servant home, August 29, 1901.[16]

In trying to discover the reason why such an aggressive and successful missionary as Olaus Okerson retired so early in life as he did — he was only about forty-eight years of age at that time — and turned to other pursuits, several factors should be borne in mind. In the first place, it will be remembered that he was a son of the soil who loved to work hard with his hands at the same time as he preached the gospel. This he had done more or less all his life. Secondly, like Paul, the Swedish Baptist "break-plow" missionary had a very independent mind and preferred to be self-supporting, as far as possible, in his Christian ministry. To work for others with any kind of restrictions and regulations became burdensome, in the long run, to his restless spirit. In the third place, there is reason to believe that the man who had sacrificed and labored so hard to break ground for Baptist work both in Minnesota and on the West Coast, was unegotistic enough to feel that his own displacement by younger men, who could build upon the foundation he had laid, would tend toward the furtherance of the gospel and the Kingdom of God. All honor to the noble pioneer who was willing, so early in life, to retreat to the place of the forgotten preacher! Finally, the extreme hardship and privations of pioneer life had already begun to undermine his naturally strong physical constitution. The bodily machinery was breaking down.

---

[15] Asplund, *Lecture on Okerson.* Berg, op. cit., p. 41. Hall, op. cit., p. 95.
[16] Berg, op. cit., pp. 42–45; Asplund, *Lecture on Okerson.*

It should not be inferred, however, that the man in whose heart a consuming missionary fire had been burning from his early youth, could completely retire from all Christian activity. During those eighteen silent years in Portland and McMinnville, Okerson continued to make missionary journeys both in Oregon and Washington, preaching the gospel, visiting homes and distributing Bibles and other religious literature. Upon the return from one such extended tour in the Seattle area he took sick and, after a few days, entered the haven of rest.

JOHN ONGMAN

Sixty-four years in continuous and energetic service as a preacher of the Christian gospel is a record not often attained. John Ongman began his public ministry at the age of twenty-one, a year or two after his conversion, and delivered his last lecture the day before he died, in his eighty-sixth year. The first twenty-two years of this long and useful service were given to America, primarily Minnesota, and the last forty-one years to Sweden.

Ongman was born November 15, 1845, in Oviken, Jämtland, a province in northern Sweden which has given to the Baptist cause a number of prominent preachers on both sides of the Atlantic. His conversion at the age of eighteen was definite and profound. A few weeks later, March 4, 1864, he was immersed and united with the Baptist church at Myssjö."[17] As he stepped out of the baptismal water, the Holy Spirit descended upon him and flooded his soul with divine power and peace and joy. This experience, no doubt, accounts to a certain extent for the Spirit centered emphasis in Ongman's later preaching. One evening shortly after his conversion he passed a house from which dance music was heard. He promptly entered the dance room and asked for quiet for a few minutes, during which he pleaded with the young people to turn to God.[18] This, too, became characteristic of his whole life. For to the very end he was always an aggressive and compassionate soul winner. A tour of evangelism during the spring of 1866, in his home province and in the neighboring province of Medelpad, helped to confirm young Ongman in his divine call to preach the gospel. For his was the joy to see many turn to the Lord in repentance and faith.

---

[17] John Magnuson, *John Ongman—En Levnadsteckning,* Örebro, 1932, p. 22.

[18] Ibid., p. 24.

The great famine in northern Sweden in 1867 and 1868 caused many to emigrate to the United States. Ongman was one of these. Having arranged that his wife[19] and small daughter were to follow him later, he left for America May 14, 1868. After a few months in Chicago, during which time he worked at manual labor, Ongman accepted an invitation to come to Red Wing, Minnesota, and became the spiritual leader of a group of Baptists whom he had learned to know in Sweden.[20] This was in the month of November, 1868, and marks the beginning of twenty-two years of fruitful ministry in the United States. Shortly after Ongman's arrival in Red Wing, a Baptist church was organized,[21] and the young pastor was ordained to the gospel ministry.

Like most pioneer preachers, Ongman was not content to limit his service to one place. He made extended preaching tours to surrounding Swedish settlements. In the summer of 1869 he accepted a call to become missionary to the Scandinavian people of Minnesota at a salary of four hundred dollars, part of which was paid by the American Baptist Home Mission Society. About that time his family arrived from Sweden, and they located at Houston, in the extreme southeastern corner of the state, where they stayed until 1871, when Anoka became the missionary's headquarters.[22] Being endowed with a strong physique and inspired with a glowing soul winning zeal, Ongman made an ideal frontier missionary. Many years later the old people spoke of those times with tears of gratitude and recalled how they had cherished the visits of Ongman as he came, often wading through deep mud and swamps, to bring the good news of salvation to the pioneers in their primitive dwellings. Souls were saved, saints were edified, and churches were organized and strengthened. In the fall of 1871 death entered the missionary's home at Anoka and claimed the wife and mother, leaving the father alone to care for two little motherless children. About a year later Ongman married a daughter of the pioneer preacher John Erickson.

By 1873 the energetic missionary felt that the time was ripe to organize into a church the few Swedish Baptists who lived in St. Paul. This took place May 18, 1873 (see Ch. Thirteen). Ongman became the first pastor, and served this church three terms, 1873–1875; 1881–1885; and 1886–1890. During this period he was also twice pastor of the First Swedish Baptist Church (Addison Street) of Chicago, (see Ch. Seven), 1875–1881, 1885–1886. During his first term in Chicago Ongman pursued studies at Edgren's Seminary, completing a three year course in two years, and was graduated in the spring of 1877. In both St. Paul and Chicago, Ongman gave the churches an unusually aggressive, evangelistic, and organizational leadership. He was a born general of the best type! In St. Paul, especially during his second and third terms, profound and sweeping revivals visited the church. The membership increased from ninety-nine in 1881, when Ongman began his second term, to 473 in 1890 when he terminated his third term as well as his work in America.[23]

---

[19] Ongman was married in 1865 to Kristina Anderson a woman twelve years his senior.

[20] Magnuson, op. cit., p. 38. Ryden, op. cit., p. 55. *Svenska Standaret,* November 10, 1925.

[21] This church was dissolved after a few years when several of the members moved to Minneapolis.

[22] Magnuson, pp. cit., p. 42; Ryden, op. cit., p. 55.

For some time Ongman had been keenly aware of a spiritual coldness that caused him much pain. He had agonized in prayer for more than a year, and in 1886 it pleased God to answer that prayer. The result was a most remarkable and profound spiritual experience which really was a repetition of the infilling of the Holy Spirit which he had received at his baptism. It became a creative factor in all the rest of his life and work. At that time the deeper spiritual life and the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer had become a vital concern as well as an actual experience on the part of many Christians in America. Foremost among the many agencies that God used to revive His people in those years was the saintly Baptist pastor in Boston, A. J. Gordon. The story of his life and the spiritual transformation of his church, the Clarendon Street Church, as well as Gordon's books, most of which dealt with the Holy Spirit and the Spirit filled life, brought untold blessings to God's people everywhere. Another powerful factor in the spiritual awakening in the eighties and nineties was A. B. Simpson, the founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance Movement. In his search for the deeper things of God, Ongman found much help in Gordon's writings, and he made a special trip to New York for further study of the Simpson Mission at close range. A. B. Simpson's proclamation of the fourfold truth concerning Christ as Savior, Sanctifier, Healer, and Coming King, gripped the heart of the St. Paul pastor, and his church soon began to feel the impact of a new spiritual power in the pulpit.[24] It was a wholesome scriptural and practical emphasis on the separated life of the believer, as well as on other fundamental teachings of the Scriptures, which continued to bless the church for years after Ongman had left for other scenes of labor.

[23] Magnuson, op. cit., pp. 56, 80.

[24] Magnuson, op. cit., pp. 64–68.

In leadership ability Ongman undoubtedly was one of the most talented among Swedish Baptist preachers. His aggressive guidance and wise counsel were highly prized in denominational circles. When the General Conference was organized in 1879 Ongman was elected its first moderator. The two succeeding years he was reelected to the same office.

The last forty-one years of his life Ongman labored in Sweden. After a visit there in 1889 he received a call from the Baptist church of Örebro, which he felt led to accept and he moved there with his family the following year. It was in Sweden primarily that Ongman's great life work was done. In the strength of his manhood — Ongman was then forty-five years old — and endued with power from on high, he returned to his native land at a time when, apparently, the spiritual life was at a rather low ebb both among Baptists and others. With characteristic spiritual zeal he threw himself into the work to bring the lost to Christ and to revive the church. The net result: A Bible school organized in Örebro, 1892, and young people sent out all over Sweden to win souls for Christ; a seminary started in 1908; a publication society formed; and a foreign mission movement launched which became instrumental in sending out scores of men and women as missionaries to India, China, Congo, and South America. It was fundamentally a work of daring faith in which Ongman always excelled. In fact, the whole Örebro movement appeared too radical in methods and too daring in faith to the more cautious leadership of the Baptists in Sweden. Hence, devisive tendencies were apt to develop. It is fair to state, however, that Ongman's preaching with its emphasis on the great fundamentals of the Christian faith, namely the atonement of Christ, the Spirit filled life, and the imminent return of the Lord, became a trumpet call to the Christians in Sweden.

About a year before his death Ongman told his son Clarence: "I believe my separation from the present life will take place in this way: I will go to bed as usual in the evening, and in the morning, I will awake in heaven."[25] Almost literally this premonition was fulfilled. For on Friday he had taken care of his work at the seminary as he was wont to do, and retired in the evening at the usual hour. The next morning, February 28, 1931, in his eighty-sixth year, without pain or struggle, his redeemed spirit winged its way to eternal realms.

ANDREW BLOMGREN

It has been said that Minnesota has had many preachers, but only one Blomgren. There is a reason for that saying, for in many respects he was unique. Andrew Blomgren, commonly known as "the Minnesota Philosopher," was born at Mora in the province of Dalarne, Sweden, May 14, 1845. At the early age of thirteen he experienced the new birth and was immersed into the fellowship of the local Baptist church by Näs Per Pehrson, that renowned preacher-evangelist who time and again had suffered imprisonment for his faith.[26] The young boy had a very inquisitive mind and an insatiable thirst for knowledge. The opportunities, however, to satisfy that thirst were exceedingly limited in those days, especially for a poor man's son. But Blomgren was more fortunate than the average. For the local dean (prost) of the state church had observed the studious boy and offered him the use of his large library. This opportunity he could not pass up. He eagerly read, in fact, carefully studied every volume in the extensive collection of books. In the course of a few years he thus acquired a considerable amount of knowledge which prepared him for his later life work as a minister of the gospel.

---

[25] Magnuson, op. cit., p. 318.

The "America fever," spreading like an epidemic among the sons and daughters of Sweden, began to affect the Blomgren family in 1868. At that time there were at least two fundamental reasons for emigration, chiefly from northern Sweden. The great famine of 1868 (nödåret) with its extreme scarcity of food brought much hardship and suffering as starvation stared many a family in the face. Moreover, and what seemed worse than physical starvation, was the fact that religious persecution still raged in almost unabated fury. An intolerant state church made havoc of the liberty loving Baptists. In the month of May, 1868 a large company of people from Dalarne, including the Blomgrens, bade farewell to the native land in order to seek bread and liberty on the hospitable shores of the New World.[27] A part of that group located in Isanti County, Minnesota, which they reached the last days of June. Here Andrew Blomgren's father took a homestead, and an interesting pioneer life thus had its beginning.

In at least two respects Andrew Blomgren is unique among Swedish Baptist preachers. In the first place, he spent all his life after he came to America, a period of some forty-five years, as a preacher, or farmer preacher, in one county, Isanti County, Minnesota. He began in a quiet way to witness for his Lord in his own home church, later known as the Isanti North Church. From 1874 to 1884 he served as pastor of the church, at the same time supporting himself and his family by farm work. Then followed twelve years as shepherd of the Stanchfield church; one year as missionary in Isanti County; six years as pastor in Dalbo; and finally back to Isanti North for nine years, 1903–1912.[28]

---

[26] Ryden, op. cit., p. 59. *Svenska Standaret,* July 2, 1913; May 2, 1913.
[27] *Svenska Standaret,* July 2, 1913. Ryden, op. cit., pp. 60–61.

Second, Blomgren was unique as an independent and profound thinker, philosopher, theologian, and expounder of God's Word. He not only read books, but he studied them, and was never satisfied until he discovered a satisfactory object and the underlying reason why any particular author wrote a book. In that way he became acquainted not only with the letter of the book but he also caught the spirit of the author. Throughout the years the "self made" Isanti preacher acquired a vast amount of knowledge, wider in scope and certainly more accurate and profound than that of most men of academic training. Professor Eric Sandell, easily one of the most brilliant minds among Swedish Baptists, said at a certain time: "It makes no difference what subject one may discuss with Pastor Blomgren. He is at home in all fields: theology, philosophy, psychology, history, poetry. He has read and he has thought, and is always prepared for an intelligent contribution to the solution of any problem."[29] His sermons, both in content and delivery, were original, profound and yet extremely simple and clear. It was always expository preaching, feeding the flock of God in green pastures.

Blomgren went to his reward June 16, 1913. When a group of preachers, who visited him shortly before his decease, began to talk about his great work in Isanti County, the old pioneer replied, "Don't talk about me, but Jesus. By grace and only by grace I am saved."[30]

O. S. LINDBERG

In much Lindberg was a contrast to Blomgren. However, at least two things they had in common: neither one had a formal theological training, and both were privileged, by the grace of God, to give long and fruitful pioneer service to Minnesota.

O. S. Lindberg hailed from the province of Värmland, Sweden, where he was born at Silbodal, April 16, 1843. He enjoyed the nurture of a happy home, and at the age of twenty-five he surrendered his life in saving faith to Christ. Like so many others, he emigrated to America, and after a few months in St. Paul in the summer of 1870, located at Hastings, Minnesota. Here, undoubtedly for the first time in his life, he had the opportunity of hearing two Baptist preachers, namely, John Anderson and John Ongman. The seed sown fell on good ground. Lindberg, anxious to know the truth, searched the New Testament with the result that on May 15, 1871, he followed Christ in baptism. The immersion took place in a creek near Hastings, and the administrator was John Anderson, "the apostle John," of Minnesota.[31] The following spring Lindberg married Christine Nelson, and with the intention of becoming a farmer, bought a piece of land in Fish Lake, where his wife's parents lived. God, however, had other plans for the young man's life. The beginning of his work as a gospel preacher is full of human interest and divine guidance. It happened in this way:

---

[28] *Seventy-five Years History,* Bethel Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minn., p. 98.

[29] Ryden, op. cit., p. 61.

[30] Ibid., p. 63.

A few days after his arrival in Fish Lake in the spring of 1872, Lindberg went to the settlement of Rush Lake, located nearby, in order to visit a couple of friends. He remained over Sunday when a group of people from the neighborhood assembled to read a sermon from a familiar postil. Then he was asked to give a testimony, which he also did. The Lord added His blessing to what was said, and the people asked the young man to stay for a week and hold meetings. He replied that he was no preacher, though a happy Christian. Neverthless, he was urged to remain and preach, and with fear and trembling he consented. That was a week never to be forgotten either by Lindberg or the people in the Rush Lake settlement. A revival broke out and many professed faith in the Lord Jesus. Shortly thereupon John Ongman came to Rush Lake and immersed eighteen believers who formed a Baptist church.[32] O. S. Lindberg had set his hand to the plow and could not look back. It was the beginning of forty-two exceedingly happy and busy years in the Christian ministry.

Later in the fall Lindberg worked for a while at his trade as a carpenter in St. Paul. At the same time he began to conduct meetings in his home on Seventh Street and to preach the Word on Sunday afternoons. After a while the basement of the American Baptist Church became their meeting place. On the advice of the pastor of that church, Lindberg later gave up his manual labor and devoted all his time to the ministry. He visited the homes in the day time and preached in the evenings.[33] Largely as a result of that faithful application of Paul's practice to teach both publicly and from house to house, the First Swedish Baptist Church of St. Paul came into existence in the spring of 1873. In the fall of that year Lindberg returned to Hastings. Here he supported himself and his family by his trade, while he continued to preach the gospel to his countrymen. Not a few believed and a Swedish Baptist church was formed.

---

[31] Ryden, op. cit., p. 52; Hall, op. cit., p. 310; *Svenska Standaret,* Aug. 9, 1927; *Annual,* Swed. Baptist Churches of America, Part I, 1931–1932, pp. 103–104.

[32] Ryden, op. cit., pp. 52–53. *Svenska Standaret,* Aug. 9, 1927.

[33] *Fifty Years History,* First Swedish Baptist Church, St. Paul, Minn., p. 14.

Cokato, Minnesota, became Lindberg's first full time charge. He assumed the pastoral care of that church in October, 1874. The Cokato church at that time was only three years old. Here the young pastor was ordained to the gospel ministry and labored faithfully for the space of five years, returning for a second term of service, 1899–1906. To give a detailed account of this noble pioneer and his work in Vasa, Grove City, Red Wing and Rush City, all in Minnesota, and in Ogema, Wisconsin, and Austin, Texas, would be impossible within the framework of this sketch. After three years in Rush City, 1911–1914, Lindberg retired from the active ministry, and lived for six years in Cokato whence he moved in 1920 to California. Los Angeles was his home the last ten years of his life. On January 22, 1931, God called His servant to the home of the many mansions, his life companion having preceded him in death by five years.

It is undoubtedly true that in many respects O. S. Lindberg was an average pioneer preacher. For the most part he served smaller churches, as so many other faithful brethren did. Like these, too, he entered the Christian ministry directly from his earthly pursuit, in his case the trade of a carpenter. Also, in the manner of the typical frontier preacher, he was a careful student, especially of one book, the sacred Scriptures, which he knew how to present in a friendly and appealing way for the practical needs of both sinners and saints.[34] In his disposition he was outstandingly optimistic, cheerful, and friendly. Truly, he lived on the sunny side of life.

"O. S. Lindberg," says P. Ryden, "is one of the happy few who has attained to the Pauline standard required of a pastor (I Tim. 3:4). He reared a large family, ten children survived him — and all of them are believers on the Lord."[35] Three of the children, one son and two daughters have served as foreign missionaries, and the others likewise have followed in the footsteps of God-fearing parents, being active, in one way or another, in the church.

OLOF ENGBERG

The major part of his life belongs to Sweden. However, even though he emigrated to America at the mature age of fifty-six, his contribution to missionary work here, especially in Minnesota, is of a high order and of permanent value.

---

[34] Hall, op. cit., p. 313.

[35] Ryden, op. cit., p. 54.

Olof Engberg was born August 28, 1931, at Bollnäs in the province of Hälsingland in northern Sweden. With his parents he moved to the city of Sundsvall in 1845. In the Engberg home, believers (läsare) were wont to gather for spiritual edification, and the first Baptist preachers ever to visit northern Sweden, namely, D. Forsell and C. J. Möllersvärd from Stockholm, were invited to hold services there. It was thus a congenial spiritual atmosphere in which young Olof grew up. At the tender age of eight he had read through the New Testament, and two years later also the Old Testament and Pilgrim's Progress. After a severe illness in his twentieth year he made the great committal to his Lord. A careful study of the New Testament, and, strangely enough, the reading of Luther's books, led both Olof Engberg and his parents, as well as many of the other local believers, to see the necessity of Scriptural baptism. The result was that not less than forty-three persons, including Olof Engberg and his parents, were immersed August 20, 1855, and formed the Baptist Church of Sundsvall.[36] This was the first Baptist church in northern Sweden (Norrland), and from the very beginning of its existence it exercised a leading influence in religious work in that part of the country. A potent factor of that influence, especially during the first twenty years, was Olof Engberg.

As a wise and aggressive organizer, missionary leader and promoter, Engberg has had few equals among Swedish Baptists. At his and his father's initiative in 1857, the Sundsvall Mission Society was organized, whose object it was to evangelize especially northern Sweden. After his father's death the following year, young Engberg assumed the leadership of the Mission Society, which he retained for nearly twenty years, or until 1877, when he moved to southern Sweden.[37] It was a heroic undertaking, indeed! For there were no financial resources and no large constituency upon whom to depend. Only a few interested believers in the small Baptist church of Sundsvall, which church at the time of the founding of the Mission Society was only two years old. But Engberg had faith to expect great things from God and also to attempt great things for God.

He was really a creative genius of the most exceptional type in the matter of discovering talented young people and firing them with enthusiasm to go out and serve Christ. It was said of Napoleon that he could stamp armies out of the earth. In like manner it could be said of Engberg that he stamped preachers out of the ground; nobody seemed to know whence they came nor how it was done.[38] For twenty years he filled all of "Norrland" with strong and gifted preachers who traveled through the various provinces, proclaiming with singular grace and warmth the gospel of the Son of God. The dry scholasticism that the parish clergy had to offer had failed to satisfy the spiritual soul hunger of the people. Hence they responded everywhere, and with great readiness of both heart and mind, to the simple and heart warming message of Engberg's lay preachers. Theirs was a Bible centered message and deeply rooted in a personal experience of God's redeeming grace. Wherever these gospel heralds from the Sundsvall Mission Society appeared they kindled a fire which neither the local priest nor the sheriff could put out.[39] Engberg made sure, also, that each evangelist became a colporteur and was supplied with as large a load of Bibles, books, and tracts as he could carry on his back, in order to disseminate the printed Word, if possible, in every home of northern Sweden. What a task! A publishing house in Sundsvall, established by Engberg and the Mission Society, supplied the preachers with all the necessary material. At times the Engberg missionaries numbered more than fifty, and they did not confine their work to northern Sweden only but also made extensive tours to the southern part of the country as well as to Norway and Finland.[40]

---

[36] C. G. Lagergren, *Nya Wecko-Postens Kalender,* 1913, pp. 145–161. *Svenska Standaret,* Febr. 16, 1912. *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Febr. 13, 1912. Hall, op. cit., pp. 329–330.

[37] Lagergren, *Nya Wecko-Postens Kalender,* 1913, pp. 146–148.

Engberg was a wise builder. His missionary-evangelistic work, done through the Sundsvall Mission Society, had a good organizational basis upon which an enduring structure was built. The converts were gathered into well organized congregations, many of which grew into strong and self-supporting churches. However, important as this work was, Engberg does not stand alone in that field. Others have done the same kind of work. But in another area he became an absolute pioneer, and launched a project, both original and heroic, of a type that none other among Swedish Baptists, either before or after his time, ever attempted. We refer to the week-day schools.[41] As a bold champion of truth and enlightenment in dark times and in a dark corner of the world, Engberg keenly realized the low status of public education and the gross ignorance which prevailed among the people, especially in the country districts and in the distant forest and mountain areas. Moreover, he had experienced, due to the prevailing prejudice and the determined opposition of the clergy and the state church, how difficult it was for his evangelists to gain entrance to the hearts and the homes of the people. It was then that a daring thought gripped Engberg's soul — as we believe, inspired by the Spirit of God. The resistance somehow must be broken down, and intellectual light and spiritual help brought to a people in desperate need. He called for volunteers, chiefly young women, strong in body, and of a kind and buoyant disposition, who would go out, primarily into the darkest and most neglected regions, and establish day schools for children. Here again we see revealed Engberg's clear, practical vision, and his profound understanding of human nature. His teachers, as well as the evangelists, were selected with utmost care, and practically all of them made good.

---

[38] Ibid., p. 153.

[39] Ibid., p. 153.

[40] *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Febr. 13, 1912.

[41] Lagergren, op. cit., pp. 155–156.

In the Engberg schools they taught the children not only the three R's, but also the Bible and singing. Every day's work, too, was opened and closed with prayer. Religion became a fascinating and living reality as it was exemplified in the life of consecrated teachers. Almost immediately the schools became popular, and the Engberg teachers were in great demand. The parents observed the change in their children, they learned not only to read but also to think and to understand what they read. Best of all, there was a marked improvement in their conduct. The schools became flourishing mission centers and strongholds of evangelism. The same teachers who taught the children during the week days held Sunday school for young and old on the Lord's Day. Meetinghouses were crowded, and many turned to God in saving faith. At least three thousand children annually attended the Engberg schools, taught by some forty or more teachers.[42]

After twenty years of strenuous and unusually successful work in "Norrland" Engberg moved to southern Sweden in 1877, where he engaged, though not on as large a scale as formerly, in missionary activities for another ten years. At that time Engberg felt that his work in Sweden was completed. His children had all emigrated to America. In 1887, at the age of fifty-six, he decided the time had come to see what the New World had to offer. He located in Isanti County, Minnesota, where he spent the remaining twenty five years of his life. The following year he became pastor of the Isanti Baptist Church. After the peaceful division of the church in 1893, he continued to minister to the Isanti North Church until 1896, when he retired. The missionary fire, however, was burning unabated in his heart, even though he very naturally lacked strength to accomplish what he had done in his younger days in Sweden. He never ceased, as long as his tongue could speak, to have his eyes on talented Christian young people and to encourage them to go out and witness for the Lord.[43] Several young men whose lives were touched by the missionary-minded Engberg later became successful preachers and denominational leaders among Swedish Baptists. Prominent among these are: J. O. Backlund, for many years editor of the Standard, Eric Scherstrom, and the late India missionary, E. O. Schugren.

---

[42] *Kalender,* op. cit., pp. 156–159.

The Engbergs lived after his retirement, in a very humble dwelling located by a small lake midway between Cambridge and the Isanti North Church. They called their home Mamre. Here Engberg lived, like Abraham of old (Gen. 13:18) with his Sarah — that was the name of his wife — until God summoned them both to His mansions. A merciful Providence arranged it so that the two old pilgrims entered the pearly gates almost simultaneously. Sarah, his life's companion for fifty-four years, passed on to her reward November 12, 1911, and Engberg himself breathed his last fourteen days later, November 26, 1911.[44]

Engberg looked upon all the young men whose lives he had directed into the gospel service as "his boys." For them he had a loving and touching concern even up to the very last. In his final prayer he remembered and prayed for "his boys." His youngest daughter wrote in a letter to C. G. Lagergren, on December 28, 1911:

> I remember too well how father prayed all day, and how he remembered all. He also prayed, "Dear Lord, bless the boy over there in Morgan Park, Lagergren, you know, and his dear wife, Selma." (That boy, Dean C. G. Lagergren of the Theological Seminary, at that time sixty five years old, had in his early youth, when he was turned out from his home in Sweden because he became a Baptist, received kindly and wise counsel from Olof Engberg, which spread untold blessings over the rest of his long life.) Dear Lord, you know that he needs your special care—Send word to Gustaf Lagergren and his wife, that I am going home, and I am glad to go, for Sarah, the bride of my youth, fifty four years ago, is now a bride of Christ, and I shall go to be reunited with her."

Engberg's last words were, "Lord God, my Redeemer, now I am coming."[45]

---

[43] *Svenska Standaret,* Febr. 16, 1912.
[44] *Svenska Standaret,* op. cit.
[45] Lagergren, *Kalender,* op. cit., pp. 160–161.

"They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever" ((Dan. 12:3).

OLOF BODIEN

If it is true that Minnesota has had only one Blomgren, it is equally true that Swedish Baptists have had only one Olof Bodien. He was the William Jennings Bryan in his own denomination, if not among all Swedes in America.

Olof Bodien was born April 20, 1857, at Elfdalen in the province of Dalarne, Sweden. The people in this province are known to be to a very high degree individualistic, liberty loving and patriotic. On several occasions in the early history of Sweden they rose up and with force of arms made dramatic deliverance from foreign oppressors. Bodien's parents were farmers, poor and God fearing, and he considered it a distinct privilege to have grown up in such a home.[46] For poverty and privation often create initiative and a strong character, and "godliness is profitable unto all things." As a boy he had very few opportunities to attend school. However, possessed of a great ambition and thirst for knowledge, he succeeded, by means of persistent private studies, in acquiring a fair education so that after a short course in a teachers college at the age of seventeen, he was elected school teacher in his home parish. His pedagogical talents were exceptional, and his attractive personality captivated the children. In his ability to make a practical use of his knowledge and impart it to others in a very interesting way, Bodien had few equals. If he had had the privilege of a higher education, he would no doubt have become one of the noted men of his age in any field he might have chosen.[47]

It has been said that many of the world's best preachers have begun in their childhood by preaching to sheep and goats. Bodien belonged to that group. As a boy he tended the village goats, and it would often happen that he gathered the goats as his audience, climbed a high rock, which served as pulpit, and repeated practically the whole sermon, gestures and all, which he had heard in church the previous Sunday. At one time when he preached to the goats he had as his text, "You are of your father the devil." But the goats were not always his audience. He had a phenomenal memory and a rare power of imitation and could repeat sermons on any occasion. At such times it would often happen that a pious man or woman would say, "That boy is destined to become a preacher."[48]

---

[46] P. Ryden, *En Dalason. Levnadsteckning* över Pastor O. Bodien, pp. 42–45.

[47] J. P. Sundstrom, *Nya Wecko-Postens Kalender,* 1913, pp. 168–169.

At the age of thirteen the precocious boy accepted Christ as the Master of his life. In his home community it was popular then to be a skeptic as is so sadly true in any age and land, and the young convert lost his childhood faith for a while. Bodien, however, did not remain very long in the camp of skepticism. In his twentieth year the young school teacher returned to the God of his fathers. Immediately he laid his talents on the altar of service for his Lord. He moved his small organ, which his father had made, from the school to the Baptist chapel and gathered the community young people to teach them singing. The response was enthusiastic. When free from his teaching duties, he also made tours into the surrounding country to tell others of his new found joy of salvation, and everywhere, including his home village, large crowds gathered to hear the eloquent young preacher. In the midst of all this, Bodien found time for courtship. He had fallen in love with a young school teacher from his home village, by the name of Margreta Olson. She, too, was a sincere believer, and their life interests blended most harmoniously. The day after Christmas, 1878, the two school teachers became one in wedded love.[49] Olof was then twenty one and Margreta was eighteen. That it was of the Lord and one of the most happy marriages was apparent to all who knew them.

That Sweden did not have much to offer at that time, even to a school teacher, Olof Bodien and his young wife soon realized. America, the great land of opportunity for the common man, became increasingly the center of attraction. On May 30, 1880, Bodien with his family, including wife and one son, his mother, his father's sister, a brother and a sister, with their families, left Elfdalen, their home in Sweden, and reached Isanti, Minnesota June 29. His plan was to become a farmer, and with that in view he secured a piece of land near the Isanti Baptist Church. However, God had other plans for the young immigrant. His great talent as a public speaker and his zeal in soul winning soon became apparent to the local believers, and especially to Andrew Blomgren who was the pastor of the Isanti Church. He expounded to the young couple the way of God more perfectly (Acts 18:26), with the result that in the month of August, 1880, Bodien and his wife were immersed and united with the Isanti Baptist Church.[50]

During his first year in America, Bodien supported himself and his family by farming, working for several farmers in the settlement. During the long winter evenings he attended a theological seminary. The school consisted of one teacher and one student. The teacher was Pastor Blomgren. The student made rapid progress. More than once it happened that both teacher and disciple forgot that it was night, and continued their discussion of the deep truths of the Word of God until the first rays of the morning sun announced a new day.[51] A year under the private tutorship of Blomgren, the brilliant and profound thinker and consecrated Christian, undoubtedly meant more to Bodien than a diploma from many an institution of higher learning. As he filled his mind and heart with useful knowledge, he also, at the same time, received his internship in practical work. For Blomgren took his student along on preaching tours, to district rallies and other services, and encouraged him in every possible way in the task whereunto God had called him.

---

[48] Ryden, *En Dalason,* pp. 64–65.

[49] Ibid., pp 59–63

[50] Sundstrom, *Kalender, 1913,* pp. 171–172; Ryden, *En Dalason,* pp. 79–80.

At the rally which was held in the spring of 1881, Bodien was called to become missionary for the Isanti district. The salary stipulation consisted of the confidence of the believers, and nothing more. However, it is safe to say that *that* is more important than silver and gold. The labor of his hands continued yet for a few months to provide the physical necessities for himself and his family.[52] Later in the fall of the same year, the Stanchfield Baptist Church engaged the young farmer preacher to conduct a Swedish school in that community. This provided a means of further acquaintance, and became a stepping stone to greater things. The church was so satisfied with Bodien that they called him as pastor. The salary was to be four hundred dollars. He was keenly conscious of the Lord's leading in the matter, and that from that time on he was to devote all his time to the gospel ministry. His term of service in Stanchfield was only two years, or until the fall of 1883. But it was long enough to confirm the young pastor in his calling. For it pleased the Lord to use him in leading many precious souls to a saving faith. He was ordained to the gospel ministry at a district meeting held at Rush Lake March 10, 1883.[53]

It was only natural that a man of Bodien's talents would soon be pressed into a larger service. For the next four years all of the state of Minnesota, and for a part of that time also western Wisconsin, became his field of labor. He traveled up and down the state as a

---

[51] Ryden. *En Dalason,* p. 81

[52] Sundstrom, op. cit., p. 173. Ryden, op. cit. pp. 83–84.

[53] *Svenska Standaret,* March 29, 1912. *Nya Wecko-Posten,* April 2, 1912. Sundstrom, op. cit., p. 174

Sunday school missionary, organizing many Sunday schools and helping pastors with revival meetings. Scores count their conversion from Bodien's ministry in those years. He became one of Minnesota's most popular preachers and also, to be sure, an object of jealousy on the part of some of the brethren. Unquestionably Bodien proved an ideal Sunday school missionary. His gift in music and song and his extraordinary ability to attract and interest children and young people made him such. As an example of this, during his first visit to an older settlement in southern Minnesota, the children insisted that they could neither understand nor speak Swedish. The missionary, however, since he could not speak English, desired to address the children in Swedish, if they only would try to understand him. He had not spoken many minutes before they all became so interested that they completely forgot that they could not understand Swedish. They both understood and answered in that language, and eagerly looked for return visits of that captivating preacher.[54]

In the fall of 1887 his home province in Sweden claimed the service of its popular son, and Olof Bodien with his family left Minnesota to become Sunday school missionary in southern Dalarne. His stay here, however, lasted only a year. The following October he moved to Linköping, having accepted a call to become pastor of the Baptist church of that city. At his first visit there, being a total stranger, the gentleman who went to meet the preacher at the railroad station had a difficult time finding him in the crowd. He waited until there was only one lone stranger left, walking back and forth on the platform. The stranger, however, looked like a salesman or a merchant, and not like an ordinary Baptist minister. When it finally became clear that the stranger was none other than Pastor Bodien, the layman who had come to meet him did not know whether to invite him home or not. This he did, however. After the visiting minister had retired in the evening, the host discussed with his wife until late at night the strange situation, and they both came to the conclusion that it could not be quite right with a person who was so different from all other Baptist preachers. For, although they knew that a minister must have not only spirit but also flesh, they thought Bodien had altogether too much of the latter. For he was a very corpulent man.

During his short stay of only one and a half years in Linköping, Bodien made a profound impression both upon the whole city and the surrounding territory. On Sundays the Baptist church was crowded with people who had come to hear the eloquent preacher. Many turned to the Lord and baptisms were frequent in those days. On one occasion, when the Baptist pastor lectured on The North American Indians, all the clergy of the city were present and sat on the platform. That made headlines in a local newspaper, which remarked that "the Lutheran preachers sat on the Baptist baptistry."[55]

---

[54] Ryden, *En Dalason,* p. 90

One of the most sweeping revivals that ever visited the city of Sundsvall came in the three years that Bodien served the local Baptist church. It began in the winter of 1891 and continued for a year or more. Hundreds of believers were added to the church. In the first year of the revival, 234 believers were immersed, and the next year not less than 914 persons in the province of Medelpad followed the Lord in baptism.[56]

However, Bodien's longest pastorate and undoubtedly the most important part of his life work was destined to be in Minnesota. The First Swedish Baptist Church of Minneapolis had for some three years been looking for a successor to Frank Peterson. Finally, as they had heard of Bodien's remarkable success in Sweden, the church was led to extend him a call, which he also accepted. It was a great day both for Olof Bodien and the church when in April of 1893, he arrived in Minneapolis with his family to begin the pastorate which was to last until his untimely death, nineteen years later, in March, 1912.[57]

Throughout the years people thronged into the First Church of Minneapolis to hear the silver-tongued evangelist-pastor proclaim the old time gospel. Bodien was unique. His outward appearance was impressive, with a large and well proportioned physique, a congenial face of strong and pleasing features, and a pair of keen eyes which sparkled with humor and friendliness. Add to this a musical voice, a vivid imagination, an unusual power of narration in realistic and glowing pictures, and a strong and magnetic personality of the poetic emotional type. Little wonder then that he could hold an audience spellbound whether he lectured on the American Indians or preached on the New Jerusalem.[58]

His efforts were crowned with success. The Lord added to the church such who were saved, and the converts received a training that greatly helped them to grow to spiritual maturity. Bodien was a pioneer among Swedish Baptists in Christian education. Realizing that the Sunday school, even at best, was insufficient, he started a special Bible school for boys and girls between the ages of twelve to fifteen, in which carefully worked out, systematic courses, particularly in Bible history and Bible doctrine, were offered from year to year. This work, very naturally, had far reaching results in the promotion of a healthy and progressive growth of spiritual character within the whole church.[59]

---

[55] Ibid., p. 103

[56] Ibid., p. 106. Sundstrom, *Kalender,* 1913, p. 176

[57] Sundstrom, *Kalender* 1913, pp. 176–179

[58] Ibid., pp. 180–183.

In a wider sphere of activity, especially within his own denomination, Bodien's talents were in constant demand. On several occasions he served as moderator of annual meetings of the General Conference, and was secretary of the Conference hymnal committee which published two excellent song books. For nine years he acted as chairman of the board of the Minnesota Baptist Conference. He also became one of the most enthusiastic promoters of Bethel Academy when that institution was founded in Minneapolis in 1905, and served as secretary of the board until his death. Then, too, it became increasingly apparent in everything Bodien undertook, that the gospel of Christ was always social in its outreach and aimed at bringing help and redemption to the whole man, body and soul. Thus he and other preachers, one Lutheran and one Mission Covenant, and two Minneapolis physicians, founded the Swedish Hospital, which today is one of the outstanding hospitals of the city. Furthermore, the Bodien home, where Margreta Bodien assisted her husband as an ideal minister's wife, was known far and wide for its genuine hospitality. It served both as an employment agency and as a temporary home for many immigrant young women. Few were the Swedish Baptist ministers who had not at some time enjoyed the gracious hospitality of that home.[60]

When the sad news reached Swedish Baptist churches that Olof Bodien had passed away, March 19, 1912, there was a general feeling that a truly good man, yea, a prince, had fallen. The North Isanti Cemetery, where several other Conference leaders lie buried, became the last resting place of his mortal remains.

[59] Ryden, *En Dalason*, p. 115

[60] Ibid., pp. 122–124

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

CHURCHES IN ILLINOIS

In following the "march of faith" in the development of Swedish Baptist churches in America, it seemed natural to begin with Minnesota, where nearly one third of the Baptist General Conference membership live. It also appears perfectly in place to continue the story with the state of Illinois. For there, in the city of Rock Island, stood the cradle of the Swedish Baptists of America, and the membership, too, of Conference churches is next to the largest. Some of the first Swedes to locate in Illinois settled at Andover, about twenty miles southeast of Moline. Andover became the birthplace of Swedish Lutheranism in America, especially in its strictly organized form. A Lutheran church was constituted there March 18, 1850.[1] The nucleus of the mother church of Swedish Baptists, organized in Rock Island 1852, also came from Andover. In this immediate area, in the western part of the state, other churches were formed, so that in our study of churches in Illinois it seems convenient to make a twofold division: churches in Western Illinois, and churches in the Chicago area.

WESTERN ILLINOIS

Moline and Rock Island, which together with Davenport, Iowa, on the western side of the Mississippi River are commonly known as the Tri-Cities, became important centers of Swedish population from the very beginning of Swedish immigration to America.[2] As far as is known, the first Swede to locate in Moline was one Olaus Bengston who arrived with his family in 1847, walking all the way from Chicago with the smaller children and all their earthly belongings.[3] Carl Johanson, a tailor, arrived the following year. He became a charter member in the Swedish Baptist Church of Rock Island four years later.[4] By 1859 Moline had a population of some 3,000, many of whom were

---

[1] Norelius, op. cit., pp. 114, 121, 135

[2] Moline competes with the cities of Rockford, Ill., Jamestown, N. Y., Minneapolis, Minn., and Duluth, Minn., in having the proportionately largest Swedish population in America.

[3] Norelius, op. cit., p. 251

[4] Ibid, p. 251

Swedes. Even in its early years the city became known as quite a church center. At least half of the inhabitants had connection with some religious denomination.[5]

The beginning of Swedish Baptist work in Rock Island has been noted above. (Chs. Three and Four). Although there was no organized Swedish Baptist church in Moline before 1876, it is noteworthy that the work there coincides with that of Rock Island. On September 26, 1852, about six weeks after the church in Rock Island had been organized, the second baptism took place. Two of the three persons immersed at that time lived in Moline. This marked the beginning of the Moline branch of the Rock Island Church.[6]

A considerable reinforcement was received the following summer, in 1853, when the exiled F. O. Nilsson arrived from Sweden in company with twenty one Baptists. Eight of these remained in Moline, while the rest of the party proceeded to Houston, Minnesota.[7] Regular services were held alternately in the two cities. One Sunday the members living in Moline would walk over to Rock Island to worship in the small sanctuary that was erected there in 1855. The following Lord's day the Rock Island friends returned the visit and met the Moline group in one of the home, usually in the home of Charley Johnson or Inga Anderson.

After Gustaf Palmquist had left for Sweden in 1857, the believers in Rock Island and Moline were left long periods without regular pastoral care. They were fortunate, however, to possess good leadership talents within the church, such as Johannes Anderson, Anders Anderson, and later Christoffer Lofquist, who several times served the church as interim pastor.[8]. This he did, like so many of the old timers, without any material remuneration. With a spirit of self-sacrifice such as that, the kingdom of God is always being built into an enduring structure. Moreover, the early Baptists were not entirely dependent upon the presence of a preacher in their meetings. All the believers, as they assembled themselves together — and this they loved to do — had a story to tell in song, prayer, and testimony of God's redeeming grace. This was equally true in Moline.

In the fall of 1863 L. L. Frisk became pastor of the Rock Island-Moline Church. The following winter an outpouring of the Spirit upon the praying believers resulted in a large spiritual harvest. Several were immersed in Moline, and the private homes soon proved too small for the many who were eager to come within hearing of the Word. Lots were secured on Sixth Avenue and Thirteenth Street, and a meetinghouse was erected in 1866. After that, services were held in Moline every Sunday morning, and in Rock Island Sunday afternoon and evening. Another mighty visitation from on high came to Moline under the ministry of Olof Lindh. He served the Rock Island church as pastor for six years. In the winter of 1873 (Ch. Five), the entire Swedish population of the city seemed to be touched by the Spirit of God. Scores turned to the Lord in repentance and faith and, as a result, the Swedish Baptists of Moline felt the time had come however to organize a church of their own. This decision was not reached without much prayer and careful consideration at several business meetings. It is significant that the prospective charter members did not deem it sufficient simply to receive a letter of transfer from the mother church in Rock Island. In addition to that, each one, seventy-four in number, gave a personal testimony of his relationship to God. The organization took place May 7, 1876. Numerically the Moline church had a better start than most churches. On the other hand, by transferring seventy four members at one time, the Rock Island church was practically cut in half. A good doctrinal basis was always of the utmost importance to the pioneer, and hence the new church in Moline adopted the New Hampshire Confession of Faith, which is a brief summary of the main teaching of the Bible.[9]

---

[5] Ibid. p. 262

[6] *Historik,* Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Moline, Ill., 1901, p. 8.

[7] Ibid., pp. 11–12

[8] Ibid, p. 14. *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* 1881, p. 238. *Nya Wecko-Posten,* June 12, 1909.

The pioneer missionary, Olaus Okerson, became the first pastor of the Moline church. Whether his short stay of only ten months in any way influenced his successors is difficult to say. It is a fact, however, that, with the exception of Bennet Erickson, who served the church two different terms over a period of some fourteen years, and Ellis Eklof, the present pastor, who began his ministry in 1940, the term of service of all the other pastors averaged only from two to four years.[10] Notwithstanding, the Moline pastors were in many respects exceptional men, some of whom attained to prominent leadership among Swedish Baptists. There was Olof Lindh, the rugged pioneer both in the central states and especially along the eastern seaboard; Jonas Stadling, an author of note in Sweden and son-in-law of Anders Wiberg, P. A. Hjelm, a mighty soul winner on both sides of the Atlantic, and a man of great executive ability; and O. P. Peterson, who during his long term of service in the Payne Avenue Church, St. Paul,

[9] Lindh, *Minnen,* op. cit. pp. 82–87. *Moline History,* Op. cit., p. 15.
[10] *Moline History,* pp. 20–35

became known as one of the ablest and most eloquent exponents of the prophecies and of the deeper spiritual life.

The Moline church was signally blessed by God, particularly during the first twenty five years of its history, in sending out new recruits into the gospel ministry.[11] First, in order of time, was Eric Sandell. He was recommended by the Moline Church to Edgren's seminary in the fall of 1881. Later on he joined the seminary faculty and became one of the most profound thinkers among Swedish Baptists. In 1889 the church sent two of its young men to the seminary: O. L. Swanson, who for forty-three years labored as a very successful evangelistic missionary in Assam, and became known as the "Billy Sunday of Assam"; and L. W. Linder, who during a long span of life faithfully ministered in the Word to several churches. The fourth youth from the Moline church to enter the seminary was C. O. Dahlen, a man of a specially friendly and optimistic temperament, and who was withal a good poet and singer. After completed studies he, too, served God and his people for many years.

Among the great host of loyal members in the churches, there are some who especially distinguished themselves as consecrated leaders. Such a man in the Moline church was John Swanson, brother of the Assam missionary. A charter member of the church, he was elected Sunday school superintendent in 1877, the year after the founding of the church, and in that capacity he served the Lord with rare consecration and ability until his death in 1913, or for a period of some thirty-five years. He also held the office of deacon for almost as long a time, and for several years he served as vice chairman of the church. Swanson's influence as a Sunday school man and as a Christian lay worker extended far beyond the local field. In the Board of Directors of the Illinois Sunday School Association, as well as in the Illinois Conference Board, he made permanent and constructive contributions to the Kingdom of God.

Of special significance was the high esteem in which Swanson was held in the local community. His fellow businessmen — Swanson was engaged in the grocery business — bore testimony to his enterprising spirit, his sterling integrity and honesty and his unselfish consideration of others, particularly such as needed his help. A Christian business man and gentleman at his best! The president of the Moline Board of Education, of which Swanson was a member for twenty-two years, asserted that in sound judgment and unselfish service John Swanson had no equal.[12]

[11] Ibid., pp. 57–59

[12] *Svenska Standaret,* Jan. 21, 1913.

Galesburg, located some forty miles south of Moline, will ever hold an important place in the annals of Swedish Baptists of America. For it was there that Gustaf Palmquist was immersed and united with the First American Baptist Church of the city June 27, 1852. A month later he was ordained to the gospel ministry by the same group of believers, to preach especially to the Swedes in America. As stated above (Ch. Six), a Swedish Baptist church was formed in Galesburg by 1859, and probably a little earlier. After a short time, however, practically all the members moved to Altona. Another church was organized in Galesburg 1869 but, due to internal trouble, it had to be reorganized 1879.[13] The present Galesburg church was constituted in 1888, and, though never strong in membership, has given a faithful witness to the gospel throughout the years.[14] O. F. Carlson heads the long list of pastors. He ministered to the little group of immersed believers the first six years. To the pioneers in Galesburg, as in most other churches, religion was a serious thing. No sacrifice was too great in order to promote the Kingdom cause. One of the charter members, Stephanus Riden, distinguished himself in particular, in having the welfare of the church constantly upon his heart. When the congregation was faced with a financial crisis, he mortgaged his own home to supply the necessary funds.[15] As ever, on the way of the cross the saints marched to victory.

In *Monmouth,* located a short distance west of Galesburg, there was formed a Swedish Baptist church the same year as in Galesburg, March, 1888. The first pastor, after a few months of service, on his own request was excluded from the church. This sad experience put a damper on the faith and courage of the little flock of believers in Monmouth. However, they survived, and the membership increased after a few years to fifty-one. The fact that many of the early pastors stayed only about a year — in the first eleven years the church had no less than seven pastors — made aggressive work rather difficult. At one time the meetinghouse was mortgaged to pay the pastor's salary. Moreover, problems of misunderstanding and probably unwise discipline reduced the membership, after twelve years, to only twenty-nine, of whom twenty lived many miles from the church.[16]

In the fiftieth anniversary history of the church there is a rather significant statement relative to the early years: "In 1892 the church gave $15.75 to the work of our seminary and $41.70 to the General Conference and missions, while the expenses of the local church were $258.35. Had we increased our giving to missions and the school work in that proportion to our local expenses, what a different story our present records would tell."[17] Undoubtedly that would be true of many other churches as well.

---

[13] Lindh, *Minnen,* p. 76

[14] *Ten Years History* (MS) of the Swedish Baptist Church of Galesburg. *Fifty Years History,* North Chambers Street Baptist Church, Galesburg, 1888–1938.

[15] Ibid, p. 8

[16] *Brief Sketch* (MS) of the Monmouth Church by the clerk, P. O. Landen, in the year 1900.

It pleased God, however, after years of trial and much discouragement, to honor the faith of the few pioneers in Monmouth. The turning of the tide seemed to have begun around 1924, when it was decided to change the name of the church from the Swedish Baptist Church to the Immanuel Baptist Church; as a result, it became possible more effectively to appeal to the non-Swedish population of the city.[18] Other churches have had similar experiences in later years, especially after the change of language from Swedish to English. This outreach into wider areas became manifest on a large scale in the Pat Malone meetings in 1931, when, under the fiery preaching of this Irish evangelist, the church received a considerable addition of non-Swedish members.[19]

Other storms and trials have been successfully weathered, and the Monmouth church has made steady progress in later years.

In Altona, southeast of Moline, there was a small group of Swedish Baptists as early as 1857. Some of these had moved from Galesburg. A formal church organization, however, was not effected until ten years later. Several factors combined to counteract the gospel testimony and retard the progress of the Baptist church in that community. A considerable number of the members moved away and settled in Stromsburg, Nebraska, so that by 1881 the membership had been reduced to twenty; this made it difficult to keep a pastor on the field. Then, too, as in so many other areas, an intense prejudice against the Baptists on the part of the Swedish population made it very difficult to make new recruits for the New Testament faith.[20] By the turn of the century the Altona church had ceased to function.

Princeton, located in the same area and due east of Moline, was settled by Swedes as early as 1850. A Lutheran church was formed there in 1854.[21] By 1877, or a bit earlier a few immersed believers from Sweden had come to Princeton. These invited John Ongman, then pastor in Chicago, to hold a series of gospel services, with the result that several of the Swedes in Princeton believed on the Lord and were saved. On February 4, 1877, ten of the converts were immersed. A week later eight more followed the Lord in baptism. As the Swedes of the city had never witnessed a New Testament baptist before, it caused much excitement and some opposition, since the Baptists were regarded as the rankest kind of heretics. A Swedish Baptist church, with twenty-one charter members, was organized February 15, 1877. Under the powerful preaching of Christopher Silene, who served as pastor during the first three years, forty new members were added to the church.[22] Undoubtedly that was the most productive period the Princeton church ever had. For some fifty years, or more, the fellowship of immersed believers, never reaching a membership much over fifty, kept the gospel light burning, until in the nineteen-thirties the church disappeared from the Conference records.

---

[17] *Fifty Years History,* Monmouth Baptist Church, p. 1

[18] Ibid., p. 2

[19] Ibid., p. 2

[20] *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* 1881, p. 81. *Brief sketch* (MS) of the Altona Church by A. P. Hanson, 1897.

[21] Norelius, op. cit., pp. 477–480.

The first Swedes settled in Kewanee, in the neighborhood of Princeton, as early as 1855, coming from nearby Bishop Hill. The following two years several more moved in. It was not, however, until 1901 that a Swedish Baptist church was organized in Kewanee. That group of believers, never very large, has continued through the years with organized Christian work.

THE CHICAGO AREA

The beginning of the Swedish Baptist work in Chicago in the eighteen-fifties has been discussed in Chapter Six. Feeble and short lived though it was, that first church in the metropolitan city no doubt created an impulse to more permanent activity on the part of immersed believers of Swedish nationality. The time was ripe in 1866 to build a more enduring structure. That was the year that the First Swedish Baptist Church (the Addison Street Church) was constituted (see Ch. Seven). In many respects that year became epochal in the history of Swedish Baptists, for the Chicago Baptists soon pressed to the front in denominational leadership. The object here will be to trace the further development of Swedish Baptist work in Chicago and its environs.

Grace Church

Up to the time of language transition, this church was known as the Second Swedish Baptist Church. Its location is on Chicago's south side. In the early stages of Swedish immigration it was a common thing for Swedes to settle in colonies both in the rural areas and in the large cities. Thus there arose important Swedish communities with stores, lodges, and churches according to Swedish patterns, and the Swedish language was used almost exclusively. It was in the center of such a colony, in the vicinity of Wentworth and Twenty-fifth Streets, that the Grace Baptist Church originated.[23]

---

[22] *Nya Wecko-Posten,* March 24, 1897.

The beginning was exceedingly humble. There were two or three immersed believers whose hearts had became especially burdened for the salvation of their fellow Swedes on the South Side. After some preliminary prayer meetings, the first public service was held in a small basement room of the American Baptist church located on Forty-fifth Street near Wentworth. That church was a branch mission of the First Baptist Church, Chicago. The date was November 27, 1873, and the congregation eleven persons. Six of these were students from nearby Edgren's Seminary, located on Thirty-fifth Street and Cottage Grove. That fall the seminary had an enrollment of six Swedish students and one Dane.[24] It was true of most, if not all, of the Chicago churches, particularly in the early years, that the seminary students made a rich and enduring contribution to the Baptist cause. Only five persons, besides the students, at the first meeting! Truly it was a day of small beginning! The small company, however, had faith in God and in the power of the gospel. Soon others were added, and some were saved and followed the Lord in baptism.

On March 11, 1874, the Second Baptist Church was organized with twelve charter members.[25] At the very meeting when the church was formed, A. B. Orgren, then a seminary student, was elected pastor. That the Lord of the harvest had placed this group of believers in a field which was ripe for a great spiritual ingathering is evident from the fact that during the first fourteen months not less than sixty new members were added to the church, forty-two of these by baptism. The secret to such success is not far to seek: prayer and work. In the words of the second regular pastor, Christopher Silene, who served the church as pastor 1875-1876: "Thursday evenings we had first a brief sermon, and then a prayer meeting. After the Sunday evening service we had prayer meetings in the various homes, and again, on Saturday evening, we met for prayer in the church. Saturday and Sunday afternoons we made house to house visitations, distributing tracts, and inviting people to our services."[26] Such methods which were used by Christ and the early church, are bound to yield results in any place and age.

---

[23] *Fifty Years History,* Second Swedish Baptist Church, Chicago, 1874–1924, p. 21.

[24] *Twenty-five Years History,* Second Swedish Baptist Church, Chicago. 1874–1899, pp. 4–5.

[25] Ibid., pp. 5–6.

In at least two respects the Grace Baptist Church became especially known in the denomination. First, by reason of some very talented pastors; and, second, because that church became to a large extent the starting point and chief promoter of the revival movement which among the Swedish Baptists was known as "the New Movement" (Den nya rörelsen.)

It is a fact, to be sure, that the tenure of each of the early pastors was comparatively brief. There were no less than eight ministers during the first ten years. Frank Peterson belonged to that group; he served the church 1876–1877, while a student in the seminary. Eric Sandell, the most profound scholar among Swedish Baptists, ministered to the Second Church the years 1884–1887, when the seminary claimed him as dean and professor.[27] In November of 1888, O. J. Engstrand came directly from Stockholm, Sweden to assume the leadership of the church. He continued for eight years, the longest pastorate in the history of the church up to that time. Engstrand was an unusually eloquent and powerful preacher, and it pleased God to bless His people with a more or less perennial revival with the result that many believed and were added to the church. The membership reached a high of over four hundred fifty, the highest number ever attained. One can hardly over-estimate the distinct contribution toward spiritual progress that was made by the church missionary, Anna Nilson, during Engstrand's period of service. Her care of the sick and the needy, and her practical and loving interest in children, bore much fruit in the upbuilding of the church.[28]

It was during J. W. Hjertstrom's ministry, 1901–1910, that the Second Church became the focus of attention in the whole denomination. In those years the modern Pentecostal movement had started in Los Angeles, and was spreading with extraordinary rapidity throughout the whole country. Having close affinity in doctrine to the Baptist faith, it was only natural that this "new movement," as it was called among Swedish Baptists, would seriously affect many of the churches. Hjertstrom himself had an experience of a spiritual awakening akin to what was termed among the Pentecostal people as "baptism in the Holy Spirit." Undoubtedly it was a time when the spiritual life among

[26] Ibid., pp. 30–31.

[27] *Fifty Years History,* op. cit., p. 9

[28] Ibid., p. 12

believers in general had reached a low ebb, and hence there was a widespread hunger for the deeper things of God. When, therefore, the Second Church pastor issued an invitation, both to his own people and to others, to meet in his church and pray for a revival, it had a remarkable response. Sometimes there were all night prayer meetings. Not only from the Chicago area but also from many distant points, people would come to the Second Church to attend conferences on the Spirit-filled life.[29] Many found what they were seeking, and some were disappointed. Hjerstrom was a man of great talents. He was a fiery orator with an unusual power over the Swedish language, and a vivid imagination, a musical voice and a warm heart. Into "the new movement" he threw himself with all the force of a strong personality, and became its chief champion among Swedish Baptists. While it was true that many believers experienced a deeper and richer life in God, some went to dangerous extremes. As Hjerstrom tried to lead these in a sane and Biblical direction, he often met with much disappointment. The more radical element left the church and sought fellowship in groups more to their own liking.[30]

As has been the experience of so many other churches in Chicago with a membership of a north European background, the Second Church likewise came to a time when it became necessary to seek a new location farther south. Its members had been crowded out by other races and nationalities from the area of Wentworth and Thirtieth Street where they had served God for nearly fifty years. Since 1918 they have carried on the good work in the Auburn Park district, on Normal Ave. near Seventy-ninth St., where a commodious building was purchased from the Auburn Park Baptist Church.[31]

Churches in South Chicago and Roseland

From the time the Second Church was organized eight more years passed before another Conference Baptist church was formed. Then, however, a period of unusual activity began among the Swedish Baptists of Chicago, the equal of which has never been attained, especially regarding the number of new congregations constituted.

From an editorial of Nya Wecko-Posten for April 2, 1890, the following factual statement reveals a remarkable and interesting progress:

[29] Ibid., p. 26
[30] Ibid., p. 23
[31] Ibid., p. 23

> Ten years ago there were in Chicago only two Swedish Baptist churches with a combined membership of not quite three hundred, each having a small meetinghouse. By now the membership in these two churches has increased, in the First to more than five hundred, and in the Second to about three hundred. Both have erected new sanctuaries, the one of the First Church with a seating capacity of 1,100, and the Second Church with 800. In the ten year period (or to be exact, since 1882) not less than five daughter churches have been formed, three on the South Side, and two on the North Side: the Third Church (South Chicago), the Pullman and the Englewood churches on the south, and the Evanston and Lake View churches on the north. These churches now have a combined membership of about five hundred, and all, except Evanston, have their own church buildings. The total membership in the seven Chicago churches is thus about 1,300.[32]

Later in the same year of 1890, the Salem church on the West Side was organized, and the Tabernacle Church was founded in 1893. Net result, seven new churches in Chicago in eleven years!

In June of 1880 six young men of the Baptist faith started religious work in the area known as South Chicago. To begin with they met here and there in the homes for Bible study and prayer. Later they rented a church building and were ably assisted in their evangelizing efforts by their own pastor, Eric Wingren of the Second Baptist Church, a man of a keen missionary vision. He often went out to South Chicago to preach, or sent some one in his place. As in other parts of Chicago, students in the seminary actively supported the work.[33]

On August 20, 1882, eleven immersed believers formed a Swedish Baptist church in South Chicago.[34] Later on this church was known as the Third Swedish Baptist Church. The first twelve years are characterized as a period of "dissension and sorrow,"[35] and it really was remarkable that the church survived. Expressions in the minutes such as the following seem to indicate something of the nature of the difficulty: "It was moved, seconded, and forced through." The church became divided into two groups, one of which seceded and started the Tabernacle Church in 1893. The hard times in the nineties also bore down relentlessly on the church, making its economic situation desperate. Moreover, the fact that the pastors, most of whom were student pastors, stayed only comparatively brief periods — eleven pastors in twelve years — made it difficult to do a constructive work.

---

[32] *Nya Wecko-Posten,* April 2, 1890.

[33] *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* 1883, p. 104.

[34] *Evangelisk Tidskrift* 1883, p. 105. The History of the Third Church (MS) gives the organization date as the last Saturday of September, 1882: The 25th Year History of the Grace Church, p. 54, agrees, however, with the statement in Evangelisk Tidskrift.

[35] *History,* Third Church (MS).

However, a brighter day finally dawned for the Third Church. By 1895 harmony and love prevailed, and success crowned their efforts. But the membership, for various reasons, never grew large, hardly reaching the one hundred mark at any time. In 1926 the church merged with the Tabernacle Church to form the South Shore Church.

The Roseland Church was formed the same year as the Third Church, and only a few weeks later. As in the case of some of the other churches on the South Side, the Roseland Church owes its origin largely to the missionary vision of the Second Church. In October of 1881 a committee was appointed by the Second Church to investigate the possibilities of commencing preaching services in Pullman and South Chicago.[36] At the next business meeting it was decided to start gospel work in these places, and Pastor Wingren began to make regular monthly preaching tours to South Chicago. Earlier in the same year a young brother by the name of C. E. Gordh, a member of the Second Church, had rallied some Swedish newcomers in Pullman for spiritual edification.[37] Later on in the fall of 1881 he moved to Pullman to work as a carpenter in the car factories, at the same time conducting a Sunday school and gospel services. His efforts were crowned with success. The small group of immersed believers who had located in that area of Chicago soon felt the need of a church organization. Gordh, the young boy preacher, who had worked so hard to realize that goal, did not live long enough, however, to enjoy the fruit of his labor. The day after the Pullman Church was founded he died of typhoid fever.[38] But others entered into his labor and reaped a rich harvest.

On the 8th of October, 1882, the church was organized, probably with sixteen charter members.[39] It was to bear the name of the First Baptist Church of Pullman. Later on the name was changed to the Fourth Baptist Church of Chicago, and still later to the Roseland Temple Baptist Church. Gustaf Lundquist became the first pastor, serving the South Chicago church at the same time. A rare situation, but none the less commendable, obtained in Roseland where Lundquist, the Baptist preacher, also supplied the pulpit of the neighboring Mission Covenant church. That was good inter-denominationalism.

---

[36] *Twenty-five Years History,* Second Baptist Church, op. cit., p. 54.

[37] *Twenty-five Years History,* Fourth Baptist Church, Chicago, 1882–1907, p. 5. See also *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Oct. 27, 1897, p. 4.

[38] *Fifteen Years History* (MS), Fourth Baptist Church, Chicago, p. 2

[39] *Twenty-five Years History,* op. cit., p. 6.

It has been said that the Roseland church has had a particularly difficult field to work. If true, a partial reason for that may be found in the depressive influence of hard work in the large shops in that area of Chicago. Be that as it may, it is a fact that the small group of believers who started the work had, under God, a will to live. The apparently inaccessible nature of the population of that community responded to the appeal of God's grace. Souls were saved, and the church increased in numbers under the good leadership and powerful preaching of such outstanding preachers as E. J. Nordlander, J. W. Hjertstrom, Eric Sandell, and others.

Emerald Avenue Church

From a comparatively humble origin the Emerald Avenue Baptist Church (formerly the Swedish Baptist Church of Englewood) has grown both in membership and missionary influence to become one of the leading churches in the entire denomination. In the early eighties two Swedish Baptists, carpenters by trade, left their homes in South Chicago to seek employment. They walked all the way to Englewood which was then almost a wilderness on the southwestern outskirts of Chicago. They were not disappointed, for they found both work and a shelter for themselves and their families. A little later another Swedish Baptist came to Englewood in search of other Baptists there. In true Christian fashion, these three believers went out to make converts, meeting in homes for prayer and spiritual fellowship. The year 1883 marked the beginning of a Sunday school, the total attendance being only ten in the first few weeks.[40] By the time the Englewood church celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary in 1910, that small Sunday school had grown to become the largest in the General Conference.

During the years 1883 and 1884, several Swedish Baptists settled in Englewood, some having come from Joliet, and others from various parts of Chicago. In the autumn of 1885 the time seemed ripe for these Baptists to organize a church, which they did October 10, 1885; there were eighteen charter members. In January of the following year A. W. Backlund arrived to become the first pastor of the flock. After a few days on the field he was led to pen the following significant words in his diary: "At the first meeting there were present fourteen persons in the house on School Street, and only twelve at the second meeting. The prospects are very dark, and yet as bright as the promises of God. We are going to victory."[41] And to victory they went throughout the years, a glorious victory for God and His kingdom.

---

[40] *Fifty Year Survey,* Swedish Baptist Church of Englewood (MS), 1935, p. 2. See also *Tjugofemårs Historia,* Englewood Svenska Baptistförsamling, 1885–1910, p. 11. Ten Year Historical Sketch, *Nya Wecko-Posten,* October 23, 1895.

The rapid growth in membership during the first twenty-five years is an interesting factor in the history of the Emerald Avenue Church. The eighteen charter members of 1885 had by 1910 become a company of five hundred thirty-five souls. By far the greater number of additions came by letter rather than by baptism — in the twenty-five year period, 382 by baptism and 652 by letter.[42] A few figures will indicate the trend. In 1886 3 members were received by baptism, and 21 by letter; in 1888, 4 by baptism and 44 by letter; in 1890, 6 by baptism and 25 by letter; in 1895, 13 by baptism and 41 by letter; in 1902, one by baptism and 19 by letter; and in 1906, 7 by baptism and 21 by letter. The explanation is not difficult. During those years there was a large immigration from Sweden, and undoubtedly many of the newcomers were of the Baptist faith; then, too, Chicago attracted people in great numbers from all over the country. Moreover, there was a constant shifting of the population within the city itself. All these factors apparently contributed toward the rapid increase in membership of the Emerald Avenue Church. In this experience the Emerald Avenue Church does not stand alone. Many churches in the large cities have throughout the years reaped a rich harvest of members from churches in the smaller towns and the rural areas whose young people have moved to the metropolitan centers to seek work. "One soweth and another reapeth, and both he that soweth and he that reapeth shall rejoice together" (John 4:36, 37).

It should not be assumed, however, that additions by letter were the only source of growth in the membership of the Emerald Avenue Church. As in all the churches, direct soul winning always occupied the foremost place. Mostly it was "hand-picked fruit." Occasionally, it pleased God to pour out His Spirit upon praying and waiting believers in Englewood, resulting in large harvests of souls. The first of these revivals occurred in the year 1900 when Pastor Rosen had the privilege of leading into baptism forty-eight converts.[43] The second gracious visitation of the Holy Spirit in the experience of the Emerald Avenue Baptist Church came in 1908 as a result of the regular January prayer week, being prolonged over seven weeks with daily prayer and ministry of the Word. A large company accepted Christ as their Savior, and fifty-one were immersed and added to the church.[44] By the end of Eric Carlson's seven years of ministry, in 1914, the Englewood Church had become the largest in membership of all the Conference Baptist churches of Chicago, which position has been maintained to the present. However, there were not only showers of blessing. Trials, too, of both a material and spiritual nature beset the church. In the late fall of 1897 the work of enlarging the house of worship, located on Fifty-ninth Street and Emerald Avenue, was in process of completion, and dedication was to be held December 19. But disappointment came. Fire broke out in the structure November 30, and after two hours only smoking ruins remained.[45] Nevertheless, such was the heroic determination of the church that on April 10, 1898, a new sanctuary, the present one, was dedicated for divine worship.

---

[41] *Tjugofemårs Historia,* op. cit., p. 7.

[42] Ibid., p. 59.

[43] Ibid., p. 32. See also *History of Emerald Avenue Baptist Church,* 1885–1945, p. 27.

Afflictions of a spiritual nature which, as a rule are harder to bear, also befell the believers in Englewood. In the beginning of 1899 the church had considerable trouble with several members who had embraced strange doctrinal views. Suffering from spiritual pride, they considered themselves better than others, and did not want to remain as members of, what they termed, an ungodly church. Shortly after the great revival in 1900, strange as that may seem, it was discovered to the great grief of the saints that some members had fallen prey to strong drink and were secretly visiting the saloons. A vigorous and sound discipline, however, succeeded in exterminating the evil. In 1903 a movement of spiritualism, in which a few had been implicated, led to the exclusion of five members from the church, including the financial secretary.[46] These are only a few examples of troubles which are common to the average local church, and they also prove what God's grace, and good leadership, can do to weather the storm.

An important factor in the success of any church is the pastor. In that regard the Emerald Avenue Baptist Church has been favored above many, in that a number of outstanding preachers have served throughout the years. There was C. G. Lagergren, dean of the Theological Seminary, with a rich background as pastor and denominational leader in Sweden. For two years he divided his time between the school and the church and, as a theologian and strong Bible preacher, he brought order and system into all the affairs of the church, thus laying a good foundation for coming years. His successor, Eric Rosen, a wise pastor and leader, and a warm-hearted friend of all people, especially such as were in need and distress, held the longest pastorate, 1893–1907, in the history of the church. He was instrumental in starting the Englewood Hospital, the Oak Hill Cemetery, the Baptist Mutual Aid Association, the Fridhem Home, and other projects.[47] Nearly six hundred members were added to the church during Rosen's ministry. The coming of Eric Carlson in 1907 marked in some respects a new era in the history of the Emerald Avenue Church. For seven years Pastor Carlson preached every Sunday to congregations that practically crowded the church, which became the center of an intense soul saving movement.[48] During the next seven year period the congregation benefitted by the spiritual nurture of Olof Hedeen. Having been a teacher in the seminary for a number of years, and being a man of rare talents and attainments, he succeeded in leading the saints into the deeper things of God, as well as into a great soul saving activity. Other men of God in later years continued faithfully to build on the foundation laid by the pioneers.

---

[44] *Tjugofemårs Historia,* op. cit., pp. 48–49.

[45] *Fifty Year Survey,* op. cit., p. 10.

[46] *Tjugofemårs Historia,* op. cit., pp. 30–35.

In an effort to evaluate the life of a local church, it becomes apparent that the place of missions, both home and foreign, is a determining factor in its success or failure. In the Emerald Avenue Church it seems that the Spirit of God has been very effectively at work to create a practical missionary interest. Several of her members have offered themselves to foreign missionary service. The firstfruits was Victor Renius who in the early nineties went out as a missionary to China. Anna V. Johnson followed in 1903, and she became the pioneer Baptist woman missionary to the Philippine Islands. Alma Gahm labored faithfully as a missionary in Africa, as did Alma Smail in China. Gust Pearson for many years carried on for God in French Equatorial Africa. Besides, a considerable number of the Emerald Avenue young people have joined the ranks of full time Christian workers on the home field as pastors and missionaries.[49] And not least important, the church has realized its stewardship responsibility and the privilege of giving to missions to the extent that most likely it became the first Conference church to practically place missions on an equal basis financially with local expenses.

Other Churches on Chicago South Side

A secession of members from the Third Church, due in part to some misunderstanding, organized the Tabernacle Baptist Church,

---

[47] *Fifty Year Survey,* op. cit., p. 6.

[48] Ibid., p. 6.

[49] Ibid., pp. 8–9.

January 3, 1893.[50] For some thirty-three years this church carried on a good work for the Lord in the Cheltenham area. Its membership, however, never was very large, hardly exceeding at any time the one hundred mark. Undoubtedly it was a wise action when the mother church, the Third Church, and its daughter, the Tabernacle Church, merged in 1926 to form the present South Shore Church. The new church retained the property of the Tabernacle Church, and continued its soul winning activity in that area.

The Elim Church, from its very beginning, has always been known as one of the more active of the Chicago churches. A group of immersed believers, most of whom were members of the Second Baptist Church met on the fifth day of February, 1897, to discuss the advisability of organizing a Swedish Baptist Mission in Grand Crossing.[51] A decision to proceed was adopted, and the mission was inaugurated with a week of prayer meetings. The meetings proved to be very inspiring. Here too, as in so many other parts of Chicago, students from the Theological Seminary in Morgan Park took an active interest in the work. After two years the time was believed ripe to organize the mission into a church, which took place January 14, 1899, with thirty-three charter members.[52]

Emil Friborg, a student in the Seminary, who had been preaching in the mission about a year, preceding the organization of the church, continued his ministry for another year. In the year 1900 he was succeeded by G. E. Wallendorf, who for sixteen years rendered a unique and fruitful service in the Elim Church. At the dedication of the first meetinghouse in October of 1902, it pleased God to fill the little building, as in the temple of old, with the presence of His glory. The believers rejoiced in the salvation of souls at that very service. A gracious revival followed, which lasted a long time, with the result that many believed and were added to the church.[53] After only a few years the building proved to be altogether too small and on November 20, 1910, Elim had the joy of dedicating to divine service its present beautiful sanctuary.

Pastor Wallendorf was an unusually tireless and energetic worker. He was constantly moving about to help people. Immigrant young people, and others as well, who were in need of a friend to help them get work, found in the pastor a veritable employment agency. And, if any of the members were absent from the Sunday services, they were sure to have a visit either by the preacher or a deacon the following Monday or Tuesday. Such kindly interest in people could not but produce results and make the Elim Church spiritually attractive. In Sunday school work, too, Wallendorf was a trail blazer. It pained him to see many of the children and young people leave church after the Sunday school session was over, with only a comparatively small group of older saints in attendance at the morning worship. In order to remedy the situation, a combined or unified Sunday school and morning worship was started in 1911.[54]

---

[50] *Historical Sketch* (MS) of the Tabernacle Church. See also *Svenska Standaret,* Nov. 5, 1913, p. 8; and *History* of the Third Church (MS) op. cit.

[51] *Fiftieth Anniversary History,* Elim Baptist Church, 1899–1949, p. 1. See also *25 Year Historical Survey,* Elim, February, 1924.

[52] *Fiftieth History,* op. cit., p. 1.

[53] Elim, op. cit.

The experiment met with success from the beginning and was adopted by many other churches. Down through the years this practice of unified instruction and worship undoubtedly contributed much to the solidarity and spiritual growth of the Elim Church. Recently the Bible school work has been expanded considerably, requiring an extensive building program in order to adequately provide gospel opportunities for many children in the Grand Crossing area.

The Salem Church on the southwest of Chicago was organized October 12, 1890.[55] For some twenty-five years it carried on a noble work for the Lord. However, removal of many members to other parts of the city and elsewhere (the majority of the members joined the Central Avenue Baptist Church) and a certain new heresy, decimated the group and made termination of the work necessary. It was in Salem that the well known and much beloved John E. Klingberg, the founder of the Klingberg orphanages, was baptized and began his fruitful and consecrated service for the Master.[56]

Another church under the name of Jeffery Manor, also on Chicago's south side, was organized in 1949.

Churches on Chicago North Side

The story of the Addison Street Church (The First Swedish Baptist Church of Chicago), the oldest Conference church in the Chicago area, has been told in Chapter Seven. Some twenty years were to pass before another Conference Baptist church was organized on the north side. However, by 1886, when the Evanston church was organized, there began an activity which resulted in the forming of four or five churches within a brief period of nine years.

---

[54] Elim, op. cit.

[55] *Tenth Anniversary Sketch* of the Salem Church (MS). See also *Fifteen Years History* (MS).

[56] J. E. Klingberg, *Adventurer in Faith,* pp. 35–36.

Lake View Church

The near north side, where the First Church was then located, constituted the strongest Swedish center in Chicago. But the beginning of a movement northward to the Lake View district was already in evidence. In the spring of 1886, three years before the Lake View Church was organized, some members of the First Church, who had moved north to Lake View, realized the need of starting religious services among their countrymen in this new settlement.[57] As in the case of every good and spiritual work, it was started with prayer meetings which were held in the homes of the members. In September of 1886, a mission was organized with regular preaching services on Sunday, and a mid-week prayer meeting. The mother church helped the mission to erect a chapel at Barry and Clifton Avenues, which was dedicated June 26, 1887. A week later a Sunday school was started, which continued a fruitful ministry throughout the years.[58] The leading spirit in the new work in Lake View was Eric Wingren, editor-publisher of "Nya Wecko-Posten," who gave much of his time and energy to promote the good cause.

On Wednesday evening, November 6, 1889, the Swedish Baptist Church of Lake View was organized. All the charter members, thirty in number, came from the First Church.

The history of the Lake View Baptist Church might conveniently be divided into three periods. First, the early years of rapid growth and spiritual progress, 1889–1905; second, a period of dissension and decline, 1905–1921; and finally, the era of consolidation and a well balanced development, 1921–1945. In the latter year the Lake View Church merged with the Immanuel Church to form the Northwest Church.

The coming of C. W. Anderson, the third pastor, in 1893, marked a new era.[59] The following year the church experienced a profound revival of religion with the result that forty-one converts were immersed and added to the congregation.[60] The old building soon became inadequate as a meeting place, and in December of 1894, a new and spacious sanctuary was dedicated for divine worship. The period was also characterized by extensive missionary endeavors in the form of missions and Sunday schools in other areas of Chicago's north side. When Petrus Swartz succeeded C. W. Anderson as pastor in the latter part of 1898, the Lake View district had become one of the most promising fields for Swedish church work in Chicago. A continuous stream of Swedish immigrants located in that area, and many Swedes moved in from the Chicago Avenue district.[61] On Sunday evenings the church was filled to capacity with people who came to hear the eloquent and profound preaching of Swartz. Souls were saved and baptisms were frequent. During this pastorate of eight years, 154 members were added to the church by baptism and 181 by letter or confession — a total of 335. The church reached the highest number in its history by November, 1905, when the membership roll registered 340.[62]

---

[57] *Fifty Years of Christian Service in Lake View,* 1889–1939, pp. 5–6. See also *Fyrtio År,* Lake View Svenska Baptistförsamling, Chicago, Ill., p. 11.

[58] *Fifty Years,* op. cit., p. 7. See also *Nya Wecko-Posten,* November 30, 1909.

[59] Ibid., p. 10.

[60] *Fyrtio År,* op. cit. p. 7.

The following year showed somewhat of a decline which continued until 1921, when the membership reached a low level of 171. The chief reason for this tendency was, perhaps, the contact certain members had with Pentecostalism. This proved to be a divisive element in the church and checked the growth that had been enjoyed during the first two decades. It was in this period, too, that a comparatively large number of active members left to organize two new churches. During C. O. Dahlen's brief ministry, 1907–1910, not less than 115 names were removed from the church roll for one reason or another. The situation became even more acute when a question of merger with the mother church (the First Church) came up for consideration. The proposition was voted down by the Lake View Church seven to one. That, however, did not remove the condition that gave rise to this discussion.[63] To be sure, the difficult situation became worse when the First Church, which at that time had a membership of more than seven hundred members, many of them living in the Lake View district, decided in the summer of 1911 to locate less than a mile from the Lake View Church. For some time the feelings between the two churches remained a bit strained. Brotherly love, however, won the day, much to the credit of the wise leadership of the pastors of the two churches and the spirit of the rank and file of the members. Within the Lake View group a strong spirit of unity and loyalty prevailed throughout the years.[64] A revival in the prayer week of 1925 brought new strength and joy to the church. Twenty-six converts followed the Lord in baptism in the month of January that year.

---

[61] *Fifty Years,* op. cit., p. 12.

[62] Ibid., p. 12. [63] Ibid., p. 13. [64] Ibid., p. 14.

In 1929 a question of merger with the Immanuel Church of Ravenswood was voted down by the Lake View congregation. However, in 1945 the two churches, Lake View and Immanuel, voted enthusiastically to merge and form the Northwest Church, with a combined membership of nearly five hundred.

Central Avenue Church

In the year 1891 the community of Austin was still largely a prairie, but at that time families began to move out from Chicago and build homes in the new area. The Austin Baptist Church, now Central Avenue Baptist Church, thus had the advantage of starting practically at the beginning of the new community.[65]

As in most other places, the beginning of the Austin Swedish Baptist Church was small and apparently insignificant. F. O. Carlson, for some forty years district missionary in northwestern Wisconsin, made a visit to Oak Park and found friends there from Sweden, whom he encouraged to begin Baptist work, together with two families who were living in Austin.[66] The usual pattern then ensued: a sewing circle and a Sunday school were organized. These became the nucleus of the church. And students from the Morgan Park Seminary also started regular services, to begin with, in the homes and later in a vacant store at the corner of Chicago and Mayfield Avenues.

A council for the organization of the church was called to meet on August 18, 1891.[67] Fifteen charter members joined the new congregation.[68] One of the more striking factors in the early years of the Central Avenue Church is the story of the meetingplaces. In rapid succession the congregation outgrew one building after another. In September of 1895, the church moved from the rented store into its own meetinghouse. Although it was an extremely modest structure, it proved a source of much thanksgiving and great blessings to the saints. More and more families moved out from Chicago into the Austin division, and this influx of people accounted measurably for the rapid increase in membership. After a comparatively short period, the church building proved too small. In February, 1901, it was decided to rebuild and enlarge the structure, this work being completed in September. But even this proved inadequate for the constantly increasing need, for the expanding Sunday school especially was soon again crowded for more room. More rooms were added during the next few years in order better to carry on the growing work. The climax of that most interesting building expansion of the Central Avenue Church was reached September 28 and October 5, 1913, when the present commodious and beautiful sanctuary on Central Avenue and Iowa Street was publicly dedicated for divine service, with C. G. Lagergren as the main speaker.[69]

---

[65] *Fifty Years History,* Central Avenue Baptist Church, Chicago, Ill. 1891–1941, p. 6.

[66] Ibid., p. 6.

[67] The customary procedure, ever since the beginning of Swedish Baptist history in America, in organizing a new church, has been to call a council composed of delegates from sister churches of the same area. The council confers with the believers who plan to form a new church in regard to the advisability of such a step, articles of faith, etc., as well as recognizing the new church after it has been organized.

[68] *Fifty Years History,* op. cit., pp. 7–9.

Another factor of more than ordinary interest in the story of this church are three rather long pastorates. During the first four years the church was served by student pastors from Morgan Park, the first one being the well known West China missionary, C. A. Sahlquist, and the last one of that group being A. G. Lagerquist, who in his later years was commonly known as "the bishop of Iowa." The year 1895 marked a new epoch in the history of the Central Avenue Church for it was in that year that J. A. Carlson of Sycamore, Illinois, assumed the pastoral care of the congregation. For fifteen years he used unsparingly his great gifts as a leader, preacher and friend in molding the character of the church, making it into a strong body of Christian believers. Due to his emotionally tender heart, no doubt, he was dubbed among his fellow preachers as "the weeping Carlson." But there was warmth of human kindness and a strong spiritual appeal in those tears. The great influx of people into Austin from Chicago during those years also had much to do with the rapid growth of the church membership. In the fifteen years that Carlson ministered to the Austin Church, 370 souls were added, the majority, or 189, by letter.[70]

Carlson's successor remained for nearly seven years. He was the mild-mannered and wise leader, C. W. Sundmark. He distinguished himself as a spiritual builder both of souls and of churches. For both in Rockford, his previous charge, and in Austin, beautiful houses of worship were erected under Sundmark's leadership. Being a warmhearted and eloquent gospel preacher of the old school, and withal of a quiet and humble personality, he made a deep and lasting impression upon the Austin Church, and many were brought to the Lord under his ministry.[71]

[69] Ibid., pp. 11–12. [70] Ibid., pp. 17–18.

[71] *Årsbok,* för Svenska Baptistförsamlingarna inom America, 1921–22, pp. 71–72.

In January, 1917, Swaney Nelson came from Duluth to begin his work in Austin, which proved to be the longest pastorate in the history of the church, seventeen and a half years. By talent and temperament very much like his predecessor — peaceful, kind and considerate — Nelson continued to build on the old foundation. Souls were saved and the missionary influence of the church was extended both in the local field and to the uttermost parts of the earth. During his ministry 374 new members were added to the church. After 1922 English became the prevailing language in most public services.[72]

Fairfield Avenue Church

This church, formerly known as Humboldt Park Swedish Baptist Church, was organized December 16, 1891. Three families, members of the First Swedish Baptist Church, had moved out to the Humboldt Park area in the late eighties. These held meetings for spiritual edification in the homes, and the pastors of the First Church, first John Ongman and later P. A. Hjelm, as well as other preachers, came out to break the Bread of Life. The first organized form of work was a ladies' sewing circle, to be followed by a Sunday school which was begun in the summer of 1891 in a rented hall known as "the flatiron." All of the sixteen charter members of the Humboldt Park Church came from the First Church.[73]

The most interesting period, if not the best, in the history of the Humboldt Park Church was ushered in with the coming of Martin Carlson as pastor in 1909. Previous to that he had served the church as student pastor a few years. Martin Carlson fell in line with the Pentecostal movement, and succeeded for a while in bringing several of the more emotionally inclined Humboldt Park members along with him. The characteristics of Pentecostalism, such as extreme emotionalism, tongue speaking and other ecstacies, bodily exercises such as jerking and jumping, were all present at the services in the Humboldt Park Church of those years. Undoubtedly there were honest souls who received permanent blessings in the form of a new infilling of the Holy Spirit, but unethical practices on the part of some, especially of the leadership, undermined the movement and made it exceedingly difficult for the church to weather the storm. God's grace, however, which throughout the years has prevailed in praying pastors and members, has preserved the Fairfield Avenue Baptist Church and led her to victory.

---

[72] *Fifty Years History,* op. cit., pp. 20–21.

[73] *Year Book,* Humboldt Park Swedish Baptist Church, 1904, p. 19. See also *Ten Years History* (MS) 1891–1901.

Immanuel and Edgewater Churches

These two churches on the North Side are of comparatively recent origin. The Immanuel Church in the Ravenswood district was organized in 1907, and merged with the Lake View Church in 1945 to form the Northwest Church. Though never large in membership, the Immanuel Church during the nearly forty years of its existence performed a very worthy and permanent service for the Lord. The first pastor, 1907–1912, was Joseph E. Tanquist, who for some thirty-five years has served as successful missionary in Assam, India.

Since not a few of the members of the Lake View Church had moved farther north and settled in Edgewater, it seemed only natural that this church would do something to spread the gospel in that area. In the summer of 1906 a beginning was made with a Sunday school of 39 members, which met in a rented hall at 5455 North Clark Street. A preaching service once a week was also held. After some time a student from Morgan Park accepted a call to more permanent work in Edgewater, and by 1909 the time seemed ripe for the organization of a church. This took place on March 21, with C. G. Lagergren as moderator of the council. Thirty-four charter members, all from Lake View, joined the new church which adopted the name Edgewater Swedish Baptist Church.[74]

This church had a very promising beginning and really attempted great things for the Lord. In 1910, the second year of the church, the present beautiful sanctuary was erected at a cost of $15,000, and was dedicated December 11 of that year. That, indeed, was a heroic undertaking by a small group of 51 members. The Edgewater congregation extended a call to Petrus Swartz of Kansas City, Missouri, to become their first permanent pastor. It was he who a few years previously had been their minister in Lake View in the days of the great ingathering of souls in that church. Swartz began his work in December, 1909 and continued for eight years with profound eloquence to preach Christ and to lay a good spiritual foundation for the Edgewater congregation.[75] In 1917 he left the Baptist fellowship and joined the Pentecostal movement. The work of the Lord, however, continued to grow and prosper in the Edgewater church.

---

[74] Edgewater Svenska Baptistförsamling, 15-Års Jubileum, 1909–1924, p. 3. See also 20-Års Jubileumsnummer av *Församlings Härolden*. Edgewater Svenska Baptistförsamling, April, 1929, p. 2.

[75] Ibid., pp. 2–3.

Churches in the Vicinity of Chicago

As Swedish Baptists moved into the towns and cities surrounding Chicago it was to be expected that following the pattern elsewhere, they would be anxious to win their countrymen for Christ and start new churches. In this work they were effectively aided by faculty members and students from the Morgan Park Theological Seminary. Some of these churches lived only a short time, others continued comparatively weak numerically, while still others prospered both outwardly and in spiritual influence.

Evanston

In the University city of Evanston it would seem that some aristocratic authorities had determined to prevent the small group of Swedish Baptists from getting a foothold in the community. However, God overruled in favor of the Baptists, and after several years of fruitless efforts they finally succeeded in purchasing a piece of ground upon which they later erected their first meetinghouse.

The origin of this church dates back to May, 1882, when some members of the First Swedish Baptist Church of Chicago living in Evanston met to discuss the possibility of starting a mission.[76] A decision was reached to commence holding gospel services in the homes and in a North Evanston school building, and especially to seek the spiritual welfare of Swedish people living in the city. In the fall of 1885 a mission was organized which, strangely enough, assumed such definite form that in practically all matters, including the ordination of a pastor, it functioned like a regular church.[77]

The actual organization of the Swedish Baptist Church of Evanston, now Calvary Baptist Church, took place June 9, 1886, with thirty-two charter members, all of whom had received letters of transfer from the First Church of Chicago. The first house of worship was erected 1892, but after a short time it proved to be inadequate, and the present sanctuary was dedicated in July, 1895. In the early years several discouraging experiences tried the faith of the church. Mainly these were due to the moving away of many of the members. Records show that in one year, 1890, twenty-six letters of transfer were granted, which reduced the membership by almost one half. In the late nineties, there occurred another slump in the work due to the removal of some twenty-five members. Then followed a period of ingathering of converts, twenty-three of whom were immersed in 1901. This harvest continued for some years, and more members were added to the church. However, the harvest did not prove to be all wheat. A process of sifting, according to the Master's blueprints for the church, had to take place, with consequent increase in spiritual stability and continued growth.[78] Among its early pastors the Evanston church was fortunate in having such men as Charles Palm and A. G. Hall, as well as other men of great ability and prominence.

---

[76] *Fiftieth Anniversary History,* 1886–1936, Calvary Baptist Church, Evanston, p. 4.

[77] Ibid., p. 4. See also *Tjugofem År* 1886–1911, Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Evanston, Illinois, pp. 4–5.

Joliet

As early as 1860 there were some Swedish settlers in Joliet. It was not, however, until 1872 and 1873 that they moved into the community in greater numbers. About that time some religious work was commenced among the Swedes, and a church was organized in 1873 which later developed into a Mission Covenant church.[79]

A few Swedish Baptists had also located in Joliet. J. A. Edgren and his students in the seminary were anxious to rally these believers for an effective and organized work for the Lord. On October 9, 1881, a small church was formed of nine charter members who came by letter from the American Baptist Church. This church also opened its building to the Swedish Baptists, and regular services were conducted every Sunday afternoon by students from the Morgan Park Seminary. The first regular pastor, C. M. Nelson, stayed only a few months, from the spring until November of 1884. But in that brief space of time the small group of Baptists with their heroic young leader erected their first house of worship. In a letter to the church at the twentieth anniversary Nelson related his experiences of hard work and sacrifice in connection with the building of the Joliet meetinghouse:

> The stone used for foundation was begged of one who owned a quarry, and was hauled by wagons. I had to unload all the stone alone, without any help. I think if God had not helped us, we would never have succeeded. The erection of the church was God's work in answer to prayer. When my thoughts go back to this time, both happy and sorrowful memories appear before me. I remember how poor I was myself, yet I bought the lamps for the church with my own money.[80]

The most outstanding achievement, in which the Joliet church became the banner church in the whole General Conference fellowship, was the long pastorate of P. G. Holmberg. After six successful years of service by A. P. Hanson, 1885–1891, Holmberg began his ministry May, 1891, which continued for thirty-five years, or until 1926.[81] In 1893 the erection of the present sanctuary was commenced. Due to the hard times, however, it was not completed until 1897, but a basement auditorium was used for public services. Many were the souls who found a new life in Christ under Holmberg's ministry, and some four hundred and fifty were immersed and united with the church. During the last twenty-five years the church has been served by younger men who have carried on in the faith of the founders.

---

[78] Ibid., pp. 6–8.

[79] *A Review* of the Swedish Baptist Church of Joliet, 1881–1931, p. 21.

[80] Ibid., p. 23.

OTHER CHURCHES IN THE CHICAGO AREA

In Berwyn, a suburb of Chicago, a Swedish Baptist church was organized March 2, 1895. It still retains some connection with the General Conference, but in later years it has given the major portion of its allegiance to the Illinois Baptist State Convention and the American Baptist Convention. In the early years of its history the Berwyn church was served by a number of student pastors from the Morgan Park Seminary.[82] Two of these V. E. Hedberg and Eric Carlson, later on became prominent as outstanding pastor-evangelists in the General Conference fellowship.

The Sycamore and DeKalb churches date back to 1888, the first one being organized July 16, and the latter October 24.[83] There was a long struggle for existence by the few faithful Swedish Baptists in both of these places, in which it seemed at times that the light would be entirely put out. In late years, however, the work apparently has been revived. The church at DeKalb was reorganized in 1947. One of the pastors of the Sycamore church became the well known and successful foreign missionary, O. L. Swanson. He served the Sycamore church from the spring of 1890 until January 1, 1893.

In the fall of 1883 the missionary Anna B. Nilsson began to visit Morris and by means of a house to house visitation, tried to reach the Swedes with the gospel. About the same time Eric Sandell and A. P. Hanson, both students in Edgren's seminary, started to hold preaching services in Morris with the result that several turned to the Lord and believed. Twelve of the converts were immersed in the fall of 1883, and thirteen more the following year. As members of the local American Baptist church for a number of years, they carried on missionary work among the Swedes of the city until August 17, 1889, when the group, at that time 37 in number, organized a Swedish Baptist church. Since Morris is close to Chicago, the church was served through the years mostly by students from the theological seminary, including such well known persons as J. O. Backlund and David Gustafson. In 1919 the Swedish church merged with the local American Baptist church.

---

[81] Ibid., pp. 25–26.

[82] *Fifty Years of Service,* Oak Park Avenue Baptist Church, 1895–1945, pp. 4–6.

[83] *Tenth Anniversary History* (MS) of churches in Sycamore and DeKalb.

In Geneva, too, the Swedish Baptists have had a rather difficult field. A church was organized there October 24, 1894.[84] In recent years the prospects, however, have become brighter, and the church is growing in membership. The church at Chicago Heights was organized in 1902. A few faithful souls continued to sow the good seed for many years without much visible result. In the early nineteen thirties, however, things began to improve, especially under the leadership of S. E. Waldemer. Souls were saved and added to the church, and a strong Sunday school was built. In Hinsdale, only a few miles from Chicago, a Swedish Baptist church was formed May 13, 1905.[85] Throughout the years it has been served largely by theological students who could not work on a full time basis. Of late, however, full time men have ministered to the church and have experienced much success, especially in Sunday school work. The Frankfort church was founded in 1939, and the Markham church in 1948. In LaPorte, Indiana, the Swedish Baptists organized a church as early as 1884. Never large, it has nevertheless held the fort for Christ and His kingdom.

Waukegan and Kenosha

The Waukegan church, more than the average church, experienced seasons of drought as well as distinct times of refreshing. Its history dates back to November 10, 1895, when a few immersed believers of Swedish descent, who were members of the local American Baptist church, banded themselves together into a congregation. The following spring their first pastor, C. L. Wallman, began his ministry in Waukegan.[86] A period of great activity ensued, culminating in the erection of a church building 1898. After three years Wallman resigned and was succeeded in the following twenty years by a number of faithful ministers who seem to have labored under very discouraging circumstances. With the coming of A. J. Hulbert in 1922, the church experienced its first period of greater growth in membership, which nearly doubled in four years, reaching 107 at the end of 1926. In the nineteen-thirties another season of spiritual refreshing doubled the membership for the second time. Lester Thompson, 1934–1939, brought in a number of talented and high powered evangelists, and the membership grew from 117 to 252, with an especially great expansion in the Sunday school.[87] A few years later plans were in the making for a new sanctuary, which was dedicated in 1951.

---

[84] *Thirty Years History* (MS) of the Swedish Baptist Church, Geneva, Ill.

[85] Notes on the History of the Hinsdale Swedish Baptist Church.

[86] *Fifty Years of Christian Service,* Immanuel Baptist Church, Waukegan, Ill., pp. 4–7.

Kenosha is located in the extreme southeastern corner of Wisconsin, and for several years the Swedish Baptist church of that city was affiliated with the Wisconsin Conference. However, being so near to the center of the Illinois Conference, the Kenosha church decided in 1932 to join the Swedish Baptists of Illinois. The church was organized in 1904 and made good progress from the very beginning. After only a few years a beautiful and spacious sanctuary was constructed.[88]

Rockford

Rockford is one of the most distinctly Swedish cities of America. It was about 1852 that the first Swedes arrived there, and three or four years later a steady and ever increasing stream of immigrants from Sweden made Rockford their home. Most of these came from the provinces of Västergötland and Småland. By 1866 the Swedish population of the city was estimated to be about 2,000. When the Swedish Lutheran pastor of Chicago, Erland Carlson, made his first visit to Rockford in October of 1853, not being fully aware of the difference between the two English words "folks" and "foxes," he asked the American people if they knew of any Swedish foxes in the city. He succeeded in hunting up several who were rejoiced at his coming. On January 15, 1854, a Swedish Lutheran church was formed.[89]

The Swedish Baptists were somewhat slow in coming to Rockford, and did not make their appearance in that Lutheran stronghold until 1873. Whether John Ring was the first Swedish Baptist minister to preach the gospel there is uncertain,[90] but Olof Lindh states in his "Minnen," that he held services in Rockford in 1868.[91] In the late seventies several of the students from Edgren's Seminary made preaching tours to Rockford, among these A. P. Ekman, Gust Peterson, A.

---

[87] Ibid., pp. 13–15. See also *Svenska Standaret,* Nov. 17, 1925.

[88] Anniversary number, *Tabernacle Messenger,* 1904–1929. Kenosha, Wis.

[89] Norelius, op. cit., pp. 453–458.

[90] Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingens Femtio-års Jubileum, 1880–1930, Rockford, Ill., p. 2.

[91] *Minnen,* Lindh, op. cit., p. 67.

Tjernlund, John Ongman and L. J. Ahlstrom. The arrival in 1880 of some Baptists from Sweden, and also a Swedish Baptist family from Chicago, brought the matter of church organization to the front. This took place September 11, 1880, with twelve charter members.[92] L. J. Ahlstrom, who had begun preaching services in Rockford a few months before the church was formed, became the first pastor.[93] Christopher Silene served the church 1882–1884, after which a noble group of ministers led the Rockford church to success. At the fiftieth anniversary in 1930 the membership had reached the figure of 419.

The services having been held the first two and half years in a room of the American Baptist church, it was a day of great rejoicing when, in the month of May, 1883, the Swedish Baptists could move into their own meetinghouse. Within a few years this building became inadequate, and in January, 1887, the congregation took possession of its second house of worship. Under the leadership of C. W. Sundmark, who ministered to the Rockford church 1903–1910, the present beautiful sanctuary was erected in 1908.[94]

Some years ago the name of the Rockford Swedish Baptist Church was changed to the Temple Baptist Church. In 1917 a second Swedish Baptist church was organized in Rockford. Its name is Elim, and this church, too, has seen good results in its service for the Master, especially in Sunday school work.

---

[92] *Femtio-års Jubileum,* op. cit., p. 3.

[93] *Minnen i Ord och Bild,* Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Rockford, Ill., 1880–1905, p. 23.

[94] *Femtio-års Jubileum,* op. cit., p. 12.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

CHURCHES IN MICHIGAN AND WISCONSIN

Michigan and Wisconsin did not seem to have the same attraction to the early Swedish immigrants as had Illinois, eastern Iowa, and especially Minnesota. With the exception of the Stockholm settlement on the Wisconsin side of Lake Pepin, opposite Lake City, Minnesota, where a Swedish Lutheran church was formed in 1856, there was no organized Swedish church in either Wisconsin or Michigan before 1860.[1] The first known community of Swedes in Michigan was located in the town of Sparta, Kent county, near Grand Rapids. Some nine or ten families had located there, probably in 1854. But, according to Norelius, they had no Lutheran church in the settlement until several years later.[2]

SWEDISH BAPTISTS IN LOWER MICHIGAN

In this area the Swedish Baptists have always been numerically weak, although at times unusually active and missionary minded. Only 13 churches belonging to the Conference are listed in the 1951–1952 Annual.[3]

Manistee

Sometime in the eighteen-sixties the first Scandinavians began to settle in Manistee. They were of different denominational backgrounds. In 1869 they erected a union church, of which the Danish Lutherans took possession a little later, when they organized a congregation.[4]

Of the Scandinavian Baptists, who had had a share in the building of that meetinghouse some had come from Raymond, Wisconsin and a few from Chicago. On October 20, 1872, those immersed believers, thirteen in number and all of them Danes, organized a Baptist church. Strangely enough, they did not name the church The Danish Baptist or even The Scandinavian Baptist, but the First Baptist Church of Manistee, Michigan.[5] That was both a broadminded and prophetic attitude. P. Jentoft became the first pastor of the Manistee church, and he served nobly and efficiently in that capacity from July, 1873 until the spring of 1881. Jentoft was a Norwegian by birth who labored zealously for the spread of the gospel among the Scandinavian people, particularly among Danes and Swedes. In Lower Michigan he can definitely be considered the pioneer preacher and founder of the Scandinavian Baptist work.[6] He extended his missionary work to many places, including Ludington and Muskegon where Swedish Baptist churches were founded.

---

[1] Norelius, op. cit., pp. 667–668; 765–766.

[2] Ibid., p. 766.

[3] *Annual,* Baptist General Conference of America, 1951–1952, p. 115.

[4] *Historik över Baptistförsamlingen,* Manistee, Mich. (MS), 1872–1912, pp. 1–2.

In Manistee, Jentoft laid a good foundation. A revival in the winter of 1878 brought new life and enthusiasm to the small flock of immersed believers, and many were added to the church, the membership reaching fifty during his ministry. In 1874 it was decided to build a house of worship. Jentoft himself superintended the building work and did a large part of it with his own hands. The church, like other buildings in Manistee at that time, stood on cedar posts seven feet above the ground. It is related that while the building was in process of construction a severe storm arose, threatening it, whereupon Pastor Jentoft went under the building and prayed to God to keep it from destruction.[7] The pioneers knew both how to work and how to pray.

A periodic shifting of the population of Manistee, greater and far more frequent than in the average smaller city, had a tendency to retard the growth of the church and its activities. In 1882 the first great influx of Swedes took place, and many responded to the gospel message. Only a few years later, however, Manistee experienced an exodus of people who went elsewhere seeking work. This was repeated in 1890, when many of the church members moved away. The following year, however, several Baptists located in the city, and again the prospects brightened for the small church. About the turn of the century, however, there seemed to have been a steady decline. Due to scarcity of work in the city many migrated to other parts of the country, and the membership of the church decreased from an all time high of 146 in 1897 to 53 in 1929. In the last decade God's blessing upon the faithful work of pastors and church has again brought the membership above the one hundred mark.

---

[5] *Historical Sketch* of the First Baptist Church, Manistee, Michigan, 1872–1942, p. 5.

[6] N. S. Lawdahl, *De Danske Baptisters Historie i Amerika,* Morgan Park, Ill., 1909, p. 421. See also *Historik över Svenska Baptisternas i Södra Michigan Verksamhet* by R. A. Clint (MS), p. 2.

[7] *Historical Sketch,* op. cit., pp. 5–6. See also *Nya Wecko-Posten,* November 14, 1888.

Another impression from the reading of the records of the Manistee Church is the frequency of revivals, strengthening the faith of the saints and adding new converts to the congregation. What is surprisingly sad, however, is the often recurring backsliding of converts and exclusion of members. For example, to quote the records:

> Many of these who by means of the revival had become members of the church had to be excluded, and the common spiritual interest was ebbing. - - - The church experienced a visitation from the Lord and many were saved. There was an addition of 35 members, but as a result of difficulties, thirty members had to be dropped from the church.[8]

Nevertheless, throughout the years a group of immersed believers in Manistee has faithfully held the fort, and God has honored their faith and work. After only a short time on the field, Jentoft started a mission in Ludington which later developed into a church. Preaching points were also maintained at other places. A strong and growing Sunday school promised great things for the future.

Ludington

As stated above, Jentoft began to make missionary journeys to Ludington in the middle seventies. On August 20, 1876 the first fruit of his labor, a young Swede, followed Christ in baptism. Jentoft's preaching resulted in a sweeping revival, and many Scandinavians turned to the Lord. The converts who were immersed joined the Manistee church. However, since the distance to Manistee made it inconvenient to attend services there, these Scandinavian believers, eight in number, organized a mission in Ludington, September 23, 1877. The work advanced rapidly. The following summer they built a house of worship which was dedicated June 23, 1878.[9] A further forward step was taken when, on January 20, 1879, the mission was organized into a church.[10] For some time Jentoft divided his time between Manistee and Ludington, but from 1881 until 1886 he devoted all his time to the growing Ludington field.

---

[8] *Historik,* 1872–1912, op. cit., pp. 6, 9.

[9] *Our Golden Jubilee,* 1877–1927, Washington Avenue Baptist Church, Ludington, Mich., p. 1.

[10] The Ludington Church dates its origin back to the beginning of the Mission in 1877, rather than 1879, when the church was organized.

Up to 1890 the church was Scandinavian, composed mainly of Danes and Swedes. At that time, however, it was found advisable to make some readjustment in the work, and an agreement was reached by which the Danes formed a church of their own. In September, 1890, the Swedes, then forty in number, reorganized into a distinctly Swedish church.[11]

In those years, in the early nineties, there was a substantial influx of Swedes into Ludington, many of whom surrendered to Christ and were united with the Swedish Baptist Church.

Succeeding pastors, some twenty-one in all, have continued to lead the Ludington Baptists forward with Christ. Including two branch schools, the Sunday school enrollment is about four hundred.

Muskegon

From its earliest years the Muskegon church evidenced signs of growth and development. By 1887, only six years after the founding of the church, the original thirty-two charter members had grown to a number of 138. That same year fifty new members were added to the church, an addition which has been exceeded only twice in the whole history of the congregation.

The beginning of Swedish Baptist work in Muskegon seems rather providential. On the 10th of June, 1879, there arrived in Muskegon three Baptists, August Larson, P. Olson, and C. Carlson, who came from Tunadal, near Sundsvall in northern Sweden.[12] They were on their way to Manistee and had never heard of Muskegon before. An inner prompting, however, urged them to stay in Muskegon. Later in the year other Baptists from Tunadal joined the three pioneers. They secured work in the lumber mills, and worshipped in the American Baptist Church even though they did not understand a word of English.[13] Unexpectedly and to the great joy of the little group of Swedish immigrants, P. Jentoft of Manistee visited them in November of 1879, only a few months after their arrival in Muskegon. He advised them to join the American Baptist church for the time being, which they also did. They rejoiced in having found a spiritual home and spiritual friends, but deep down in their hearts they longed for the day when they could form a Swedish Baptist church.

---

[11] Ibid., p. 2. See also R. A. Clint, op. cit., p. 3.

[12] *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* 1882, pp. 77–78. *The Sixtieth Anniversary History,* 1881–1941, of the Lakeside Baptist Church, Muskegon, Mich., gives the date of the arrival of three Baptists as of 1870. However, it is apparent that 1879 is correct date.

[13] *Sixtieth Anniversary History,* op. cit., p. 7.

That day came August 14, 1881, when thirty-two charter members organized the Elim Swedish Baptist Church of Muskegon. In 1922 the name was changed to the Lakeside Baptist Church. A few months before the actual beginning of the church, the group of immersed believers had called their former pastor of Tunadal, J. P. Forsell, to become their spiritual leader. Forsell began his ministry in Muskegon July 4, 1881. In a remarkable way, God's blessings rested upon that ministry of pastor and church. The following year, both a house of worship and a parsonage were erected by the people who had a will to work. In 1885 when Forsell closed his service in Muskegon, the church membership had increased to seventy-six.[14]

Trials of various kinds, however, beset the saints at Muskegon. On January 24, 1891, their house of worship burned down. Only smoking ashes remained. But so great was their faith and spiritual vitality, that they began to plan for a new building immediately, and on December 20 of the same year the new sanctuary was dedicated. Another trial, common to the whole country, was the great economic depression that came in the nineties. Those were years of really hard times when many of the church members were forced to leave their homes in search of work elsewhere, and those who were tenacious enough to remain were in no position to contribute toward the support of a pastor, as they could scarcely support themselves. The membership in those years decreased from 137 in 1890 to 69 in 1897.[15] However, the small group successfully weathered the storm, and from 1900 on there was a steady addition of members, reaching perhaps a climax in the years 1921–1927, under A. B. Colvin's ministry, when the membership, due to a thorough-going revival, increased from 160 to 279. In that period, too, the church was completely remodelled and made as new.

The Muskegon church has had the privilege of seeing three daughter churches organized, two in 1891, when a church was organized in Dalton of 21 members from Muskegon, and one at Whitehall of eight members. After a few years the Whitehall church ceased to exist. The Wayside Chapel, the third daughter church, was formed in 1942. In the line of good pastors of the Muskegon Lakeside Church, N. E. Valerius served two terms, or altogether nine years. He had an unusually keen mind and was a profound thinker and scholar. Detlof Lofstrom became known as the Swedish Baptist theologian because of his insistence on a straight and orthodox theology. More recent leaders, as true to the old time gospel as the pioneers, and withal wide awake to changing and improved methods in religious work, have led the Lakeside Church to accomplish great things for God. The church membership is now well over six hundred with a Sunday school enrollment of some nine hundred.

---

[14] *Sixtieth Anniversary History,* op. cit., p. 7.

[15] *Fifty Years History* (MS).

Cadillac

Ole Ellison was the first Swedish Baptist of Cadillac, and he played a very important part in the early history of the church, being perhaps foremost among those instrumental in the organizing of Swedish Baptist work in that city. He left Sweden to come to this country with the idea of settling in Muskegon, where several of his friends from Tunadal had located. However, being accompanied by a friend who was going to Cadillac, Michigan, he inquired the price of the ticket to both places, and as the price was the same he thought these places could not be very far apart, and so came to Cadillac with his friend.[16] He arrived in Cadillac on July 22, 1880, and attended services for some time at the American Baptist Church. In 1883 Ellison entered the Seminary to prepare for the Christian ministry, and was graduated in 1887.[17] For over forty years, or until his retirement in 1928, Ellison wrought a faithful and constructive work as pastor of a number of Swedish Baptist churches.

Gradually a few other Swedish Baptists settled in Cadillac. By the end of 1881 they were four in number. These invited Pastor Forsell of Muskegon to pay them a visit. He came in March, 1882 and preached the gospel for a week with the result that some believed and were converted. On a return visit in August of the same year Forsell immersed four believers.[18] In order to have a spiritual home these Swedish Baptists joined the local American Baptist church. However, since they did not understand the English language, it was difficult to derive much practical benefit from the services and for that reason it was natural for them to meet by themselves in the various homes for spiritual edification.

The group of immersed Swedish believers continued to grow, both by means of conversions under the preaching of pastors from Manistee, Ludington, and Muskegon, and by direct immigration of Baptists from Sweden. On July 4, 1883, a church was organized of 29 charter members, and the name adopted was the First Swedish Baptist Church of Cadillac.[19] In 1932 the name was changed to Temple Hill Baptist Church. A twenty-two year old student from the seminary in Morgan Park by the name of M. L. Lilley was chosen to become the first pastor, and was ordained by the church on July 15, 1883. In the fall he resumed his studies in the seminary, and other leaders carried on the work.

---

[16] *Sixtieth Anniversary* of the Temple Hill Baptist Church of Cadillac, 1883–1943, pp. 8–9. See also letter to the author by O. Ellison, July 17, 1930.

[17] *Seventy-five Years History* of Bethel Theological Seminary, St. Paul, p. 101.

[18] *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* 1882, p. 200

Of special interest is the active missionary concern of the Cadillac church. Lars Arlander, who served as pastor for ten years, 1891–1901, was tireless in his efforts to bring the gospel to the next towns: Kalkaska, Jennings, Gilbert, Bailey, Bay City, and Mapleton. In Mapleton a church was formed in 1903 of members from Cadillac. What is an extraordinary record is the large number, twenty-one in all by 1943, of ministers, ministers' wives, and home and foreign missionaries who have gone out from the Cadillac Church. In that long list of Christian workers there are such names as R. A. Arlander and Mrs. Edna Grandin Sword of Burma.[20] In size of membership among the churches of Lower Michigan, the Temple Hill Church comes next to the Lakeside Church of Muskegon.

Tustin and Dalton

There seems to have been a few Swedish Baptists in Tustin as early as 1873, thus preceding by several years the coming of Ole Ellison to Cadillac. Together with other believers these Baptists were in the habit of meeting in the primitive homes to worship God and upbuild each other in the faith. J. P. Jentoft made a visit to Tustin in 1875. He was the first Baptist minister to visit the settlement, and very naturally he brought much joy and encouragement to the saints. On several later occasions Jentoft returned to Tustin to proclaim the gospel of grace.[21] After the Cadillac church had been organized in 1883 its pastors frequently preached in Tustin, which was not too difficult to do since the two places are not very far apart.

On the 17th of April, 1885, eight immersed believers in Tustin organized a Swedish Baptist church.[22] Due to some internal difficulties, the church had to be reorganized in 1889. In those early years there was a real struggle for existence on the part of the Tustin Baptists. Their faith in God did not fail them, however, for in 1905, with only eighteen members, they erected a meetinghouse which was dedicated almost entirely free of debt. But their limited resources did not make it possible to have a permanent pastor for the first twenty-two years. R. A. Clint became the first minister of the Tustin church, and he served from 1907 to 1913. Later on C. E. Wedholm ministered to the church two terms, twelve years in all. Before his coming in 1915, the small group had been sadly divided by Pentecostal teachings. A faithful few, however, remained true to the Word and to the Baptist faith, and the Tustin church in later years has experienced victories and growth in membership.

---

[19] *Sixtieth Anniversary,* op. cit., pp. 9–14

[20] Ibid., pp. 29–31

[21] *Historical Sketch* (MS) of the Tustin Baptist Church, by C. E. Wedholm.

[22] Ibid. See *Historik* by Clint, op. cit., the date is given as April 8, 1885.

The Dalton church is a daughter church of the Lakeside Baptist Church of Muskegon, a few of whose members had located in the settlement known as the Bear Swamp, a distance of some twelve miles northeast of the Lakeside Church. They started a Sunday school and a ladies' mission society, and conducted prayer meetings and other services in the various homes. Realizing however, that the distance to the mother church in Muskegon was too great to make an active participation in its work and fellowship possible, the Bear Swamp believers began to discuss the question of starting a church in their own community. This became a reality March 5, 1891, when the Swedish Baptist Church of Dalton was formed of twenty-one charter members.[23]

This group of believers set to work with much earnestness and faith in God. In 1892 they built a house of worship to which their Ladies' Aid contributed generously. At the tenth anniversary the historian of the church penned the following interesting item: "It seemed easy to build a church, especially as we had God and the Ladies' Aid with us."[24] Undoubtedly that has been the experience of many other churches. As was so often true on the American frontier, the Dalton church was blessed with a consecrated and talented farmer preacher, who as a wise lay leader ministered to the church during the first ten years or more. His name was J. O. Dahlquist. Under his leadership the membership increased to 76. Another factor worthy of mention was the presence of a family possessed of an unusually hospitable spirit. Their door always stood open to the stranger and to all the saints.

K. E. Byleen was the first full time pastor. He took up the work in 1907 and after him followed two or three others, under whose leadership the work continued to prosper. By 1920, a spiritual depression seemed to set in, which lasted for more or less of twenty years. The church membership decreased from about one hundred to thirty-three. But even in those trying times God was at work in Dalton. A faithful few kept a little Sunday school going, and preachers from neighboring churches, especially Muskegon, held services there quite frequently. In 1939 the tide turned, and, under the leadership of a young student pastor, it pleased God to revive the Dalton church. An addition was made to the building, and the church membership reached one hundred twenty-five within a period of some five years. With an almost unlimited field and no competition with others, the Dalton church has a challenging future.

---

[23] *Tio-Års Berättelse,* Svenska Baptistförsamlingen i Dalton, Mich. MS. pp. 2–3

[24] Ibid., p. 5

SOME YOUNGER CHURCHES

As stated above, Sparta, near Grand Rapids, was probably the oldest Swedish settlement in Michigan. But several decades passed before any Swedish Baptists located in that area. By the turn of the century, however, a few had arrived, and a Swedish Baptist church was formed at Sparta February 12, 1903, with eleven charter members. The spiritual ground had been prepared by a small Sunday school and a ladies' sewing society, as well as by S. A. Nelson, who at that time traveled as colporteur in Lower Michigan for the American Baptist Publication Society. He resided in Sparta, and as often as he could, while at home, he held services in the community, providing much help and inspiration for the church.[25]

Under the preaching of S. A. Nelson in the neighboring settlement of Algoma, where some families from Chicago had bought farms, a revival resulted in the conversion and baptism of several persons. In the course of a few years, as the Baptist fellowship in Algoma increased in numbers and strength, it became evident that the main work should be located there. This took place in 1910, and a few years later the name of the church was changed from Sparta to Algoma. In 1920 a church building was bought from the United Brethren. For several years the Algoma congregation shared pastors with other churches in the same area on a part time basis. From 1935, however, a full time minister has served in Algoma, and the field presents great possibilities.

In the great automobile city of Detroit the Swedish Baptists were slow to gain a foothold. But in 1916 the time had become ripe to form a church, and the following summer Eric Lindholm, student pastor from Bethel, ministered to the Detroit group. Succeeding pastors have experienced not always smooth sailing in the work, due to the scattered population of the large city as well as other difficult problems. In late years, however, the church has made good progress, especially since the house of worship was located in a more favorable part of the city.

---

[25] *History* of the Algoma Swedish Baptist Church, MS, p. 1

In 1946 another church was added to the Swedish Baptist fellowship of Lower Michigan, namely, the one at Roscommon.

UPPER MICHIGAN

Upper Michigan with its extensive mining fields, as a rule, has never proved to be very fruitful soil for Swedish Baptists. Of late, however, a marked improvement has taken place. In fact, the number of churches has increased from eleven in 1930 to sixteen in 1951, and the total membership from 583 in 1930 to 1,415 in 1951.

Ishpeming

Although the Ishpeming church, as a General Conference church, ceased to exist sometime in the nineteen-twenties, it is perfectly proper, from the historical point of view, to give an account of the main facts in its history, especially since it was there that Swedish Baptist activity in Upper Michigan originated. It was an American Baptist layman of Marquette by the name of William Burt who became burdened over the spiritual needs of Ishpeming and realized the need of a preacher there who could preach in both English and Swedish. In the spring of 1870 he wrote to Anders Wiberg in Sweden, to inquire whether he could recommend a preacher possessing such qualifications. Wiberg referred him to P. Nordell of Rock Island, Illinois, with the result that L. L. Frisk, one of the pioneer Swedish Baptist preachers, came to Ishpeming in July, 1871.[26]

The first need of the field seemed to be a meetinghouse for which some preparation was made immediately. The building reached completion the following fall and was dedicated September 8, 1872. On the same occasion a congregation was organized composed of both Swedes and non-Swedes. Frisk was elected pastor, and remained until July of 1873, during which time a few members, mostly Scandinavians, were added.[27] For a period of some ten years, the church was served by both Swedish and American preachers, more or less on a temporary basis. The missionary minded Jentoft of Manistee visited the Baptists in Ishpeming several times and brought much encouragement and wise counsel. On his recommendation, one of the members by the name of

---

[26] *Historik* av Svenska Baptistförsamlingarna i Övre, Michigan. MS., pp. 2–3.
[27] Ibid., p. 4

Michael Johnson[28] was given a license to preach, whereupon he served the church as pastor a few years. The Swedish element of the church continued to increase in numerical strength while the non-Swedish membership never seemed to make much progress. In 1889 the latter group left the church and organized a congregation of their own.[29]

During the time of A. A. Hammar's ministry, 1884–1890, there was an unusual activity in the Ishpeming Church. Religious work was started in Champion, Republic, and Marquette. And the church membership received a good addition, especially in the years 1887–1888, both by means of immigration and a sweeping revival under the attractive preaching of the lady evangelist Betsy Anderson. A reaction, however, took place after Hammar's departure. It would seem that in his preaching he had stressed sanctification to a point bordering on sinlessness, with the result that some members considered themselves too holy to belong to the church, and withdrew their fellowship. To make matters even worse, the next two pastors fell below what was considered normal moral standards and had to be excluded from the church.[30]

With the coming of C. O. Dahlen as pastor in 1896 a brighter day dawned again for the Ishpeming church. He was an enthusiastic young man, with great talents both as a speaker and singer, and he also possessed good leadership ability. Missionary work was continued in Marquette, and new fields were possessed in Negaunee and Munising. By 1901, when Dahlen resigned, the membership had reached 157. From then on a steady and paralyzing decline set in, reducing the membership to 83 in 1907, and to 29 in 1917. The last year any report appeared from Ishpeming in the Conference Annual was in 1922. In the late thirties an independent Baptist work was established in Ishpeming by an energetic young preacher.

Iron Mountain

The city of Iron Mountain counts its origin from the year 1878, only two years before the Swedish Baptist Church was formed. Because of the great supply of iron ore that had been discovered, the city had a flourishing start and a quick development, so that after eight years it had a population of nearly 8,000 people.[31]

---

[28] Michael Johnson later moved to St. Cloud, Minn., where he became a leader and preacher in the Swedish Baptist church.

[29] *Historik,* Övre Michigan, op. cit., p. 9

[30] Ibid., pp. 12–13.

[31] *An Historical Sketch, Fifty Years.* Immanuel Baptist Church, Iron Mountain, Mich., 1880–1930, p. 8.

The Iron Mountain Church, being the oldest in existence among General Conference churches in Upper Michigan, had its origin in Norway, some eight miles farther east. A few Baptists from Sweden had settled in Norway in 1879. Eleven of these organized a Baptist church on June 11, 1880. One of their number, J. E. Gronlund, who had done some preaching in Sweden, was chosen elder and minister of the little group of immersed believers. Sixteen new members were added the first year.[32] Gradually, because of better working conditions in Iron Mountain, most of the members moved there, and in the fall of 1883 it was decided that the church should be permanently established in that city. In that pioneer community the vital question of the day among the different denominations was the method of baptism, and great discussions were held on this subject. Hence it created quite a sensation when on September 9, 1883, four believers were immersed in Bass Lake not far from the city. This was the first time baptism by immersion and in a lake had taken place in Iron Mountain. The entire Swedish population, numbering several hundred, gathered at the scene of baptism.[33] One of the four baptismal candidates was C. J. Grant, then a comparatively young man, who for some fifty years was to prove one of the staunch leaders in the Iron Mountain church. He often filled the pulpit, proclaiming with evangelistic fervor and power the saving gospel of Christ.

The church continued to make steady progress and reached a membership of 67 by 1887. In the winter of 1888 a sweeping revival brought a wave of new spiritual life to the whole community. The visible means in the Lord's hand was a woman evangelist, Amanda Yman, who had recently arrived from Sweden. Crowds of people gathered and a deep revival of religion developed. Meetings were often prolonged until midnight. Nobody seemed to be in a hurry to go home. That woman was very courageous. It was said that she was not afraid of Satan himself. In that year 65 new members were added to the church, 41 of them by baptism. During G. Lundquist's two years of service, 1888–1890, 109 new members were welcomed into the fellowship of the church. However, it was not all progress. For in the same period 59 left the church by letter, 28 were excluded, 6 dropped and 3 died. The fact that thirty-two of the fifty-nine who were granted letters of dismissal organized a Swedish Baptist church in Norway meant, of course, victory for the Baptist cause of that area. The twenty-eight exclusions may have been typical of the strict discipline that was exercised in the average frontier church.[34]

---

[32] Ibid., pp. 12–13.

[33] *Sixtieth Anniversary History*, Immanuel Baptist Church, Iron Mountain, Mich., p. 8.

The next two years became an exceedingly important period, with far-reaching consequences for the Iron Mountain Baptists. The Seventh Day Adventists had begun to make some inroads into the church. Several of the members had been carried away with the sensational and unscriptural teachings of Adventism. J. P. Rosquist, who ministered to the church 1891–1892, was the right man for that critical situation. He himself had been an Adventist some years before, and hence was well versed in their teachings. Furthermore, he was exceptionally gifted as a speaker and lecturer. The largest auditorium in the city was secured for a public discussion of Adventism. It became a decisive battle. The lecture lasted for several hours one Sunday afternoon. So tremendous was the impression made that even forty years later the old-timers remembered that day as an event of yesterday. Adventism was so thoroughly repelled and crushed that it could never again be revived in Iron Mountain.[35]

The other important factor of that period was the building of a sanctuary, commonly known as the Rosquist Church. It was a large and impressive building, having a seating capacity of 350 persons. In an incredibly short time it was completed in the summer of 1892, and dedicated for divine service in the fall of that year. As often happens in such cases, however, the cost became much larger than originally planned. Not counting the lot, it amounted to $8,536.08, leaving a debt of $6,786.86, which for a small group of not quite one hundred members, became almost intolerably pressing during the following twenty years. Pastor Rosquist had planned an extensive lecture tour in order to raise money, but that plan was never realized. Instead of that, he accepted a call to the Elim Church of Minneapolis. During normal times the matter of the debt would have been straightened out much more easily, but as it was, difficulties were heaped up like sky reaching billows on a stormy sea. For it was about that time that the financial depression of the nineties struck its devastating blow on the whole country. Iron Mountain had to carry its heavy share. Almost all work stopped. The owners of the mines went into bankruptcy. There was no work, no money, no livelihood. The year 1893 was no doubt the most difficult year in the history of the church. It was in danger of losing its entire property. But, remarkable as it seems, it was also the most spiritually prosperous year. No less than 61 new members

[34] *Historical Sketch,* Fifty Years, op. cit., pp. 18–19.

[35] Ibid., p. 19

were added to the church that year, 43 of them by baptism, bringing the membership up to 128.[36]

The following twenty-five years or more were marked by an intense struggle for existence, financially and otherwise. The membership was reduced to 65 in 1908, and reached a low of 62 in 1914. But in those dark years of trial and tribulation there were many bright spots which indicated that the Iron Mountain Baptists, under God, had the power of survival. Especially prominent among those encouraging factors was the heroic spirit of sacrifice manifest among both pastors and people. For example, there was the saintly John A. Roos, who became pastor in 1894. Out of a small salary of $35.00 per month, and with three members in the family to care for, he returned to the church the whole salary for the last month in each quarter. The kingdom of God is being built on sacrifice in all ages! After eighteen years of financial struggle and difficulties, the church finally became free from debt. That was in 1910 when Oscar F. Tornquist was pastor. However, only a few years later the church had become so weak financially that a pastor could no longer be supported. A meeting was called on July 12, 1914, to ascertain whether or not the work of the church could be continued. To the credit of that small group of immersed believers, it was recorded that a motion made by Karl J. Johnson, one of the faithful leaders of the church, was passed to the effect that work should not, under any circumstances, be laid down.[37]

About the same time, and when the human resources in the church seemed to have reached an exceedingly low ebb, there moved into Iron Mountain a Swedish Baptist family from Ishpeming. Full of youthful enthusiasm and gifted in music and song, those new friends brought much encouragement and support to the whole church, and particularly to the organized young people. In 1919 the Swedish Baptists had the opportunity to take over the building of the American Baptist church. That congregation had dissolved and the building was not in use. It was a comparatively new structure, well built and practical.[38] Then, too, with the establishment of the Ford factories in Iron Mountain the city experienced a new growth, which in turn brought a number of new Baptist families into the city, making an effective church program possible.

Manistique

The church in Manistique, like the one in Iron Mountain, is practically as old as the city, and is the second largest in Upper Michigan.

[36] Ibid., p. 19 [37] Ibid., pp. 28–29 [38] Ibid., pp. 30–31

It owes its origin, which is the experience of very few Swedish Baptist churches, to the missionary efforts of the local American Baptist Church. In the winter of 1883-1884 they sent for Pastor Jentoft to come and preach the gospel to the Scandinavian newcomers. Some of these had moved in from other places in Michigan, such as Cadillac, Muskegon, and Iron Mountain; others had come directly from Sweden. Fortunately there were men in the group of immersed believers who qualified as leaders. This was especially true of P. G. Holmberg who had been active among the Baptists of Iron Mountain. In 1883 he located in Manistique. Later he trained for the ministry and served as pastor of the church in Joliet, Illinois, some thirty-five years.

After a period of preparation, which included preaching services, a Sunday school, and a ladies' sewing society, the time came to organize a church. This was done July 20, 1885, with twenty-two charter members. The same evening two converts gave their testimony for membership, being immersed two days later.[39] P. G. Holmberg served the first year as leader and unsalaried minister of the church. From the very beginning the hand of God was manifest upon the Manistique Baptists, and during the first year thirty-four new members were added, of whom twenty-three came by immersion. In the spring of 1888 another spiritual revival was experienced as a result of which 26 converts were added to the church, bringing the membership up to 83. The church was only three years old at that time! In 1894 it pleased God again to pour out the Spirit upon his people. That year 40 new members were added to the church and a total membership of 153 was reached. Forty-four years passed before that number was equalled or exceeded, a number of 161 being recorded in 1938. From 1895 until 1906 there was a steady decline, reducing the membership to 94. No doubt, one of the main reasons for this discouraging slump was the great migration of the Manistique people to the west coast which occurred at the turn of the century.[40] The sawmill industry, the chief source of livelihood at that time, had been greatly reduced in volume. After 1908, however, the church gradually regained its strength, and climbed to greater achievements, especially in the last decade.

An extraordinary accomplishment, as seldom equalled in any church, was the erection of a house of worship with a seating capacity of 320. This was done in 1888 when the congregation was not more than three years old and had only seventy-five members. But everyone seemed to be interested in building a church. Days of labor were donated, not only by members but by many other strong young men who came down from the woods at the spring thaw. By 1893 a small remaining debt on the building was paid up. They had a will to work, and victory was sure.[41]

---

[39] *Sixtieth Anniversary*, Bethel Baptist Church, Manistique, Mich., 1945, pp. 3–4. See also *Tjugoårs Jubileumsskrift,* Scandinaviska Baptistförsamlingen i Manistique, Mich., 1905. *And Fyrtioårs Berättelse* (MS)., 1925. Also, *Nya Wecko-Posten,* March 11, 1885; and Sept. 4, 1895.

[40] *Sixtieth Anniversary History,* op. cit. pp. 4–10

OTHER CHURCHES BEFORE 1903

Daggett is located about midway between Menominee and Escanaba. In the early eighties a group of Baptists who had come from Svartvik, near Sundsvall, Sweden, located there. Nine of these immersed believers organized a Swedish Baptist church, January 16, 1883.[42] The prospects seemed good for the development of a strong Baptist work in that rural community. By the turn of the century the membership numbered 73. A regular preaching ministry was maintained for the first thirty-five years or more. One of the pastors, P. E. Sorbom, stayed for twelve years, 1908–1920. In 1907 the membership reached a high of 88. From 1919, however, there was a steady downward trend to a low of 12 members in 1933. In fact, hardly any religious activity was maintained for a long time. Internal trouble within the church, as well as the removal of some members, seems to have caused the decline. In 1920 twenty-eight members were excluded from church fellowship. It is a joy to record that in the last decade the work in Daggett has been revived, counting 51 members in 1951.[43]

Some twenty years ago the Marinette church, although located in Wisconsin, joined the Michigan Conference, especially because it was closer to that center of churches. On June 22, 1884, a Swedish Baptist church had been formed in Marinette of ten charter members. In the early years this church shared its pastor with the Baptists in Menominee, Michigan. With a large Swedish population in Marinette, the church worked hard to reach the unsaved for Christ. By 1900 the membership stood at 94. Then it declined to 76 in 1933, and climbed to 131 in 1951. The aggressive pastor, G. E. Wallendorf, went into the ministry from the Marinette church.[44]

As far as is known, August Rönngren was the first Swedish Baptist in Menominee, Michigan. He invited his fellow countrymen to his own home and read and expounded the holy Scriptures to them.

---

[41] *Tjugoårs Skrift,* op. cit., p. 2

[42] Original Minutes of Organization.

[43] *Annuals,* General Conference, op. cit., 1907–1951.

[44] O. Ellison, *Svenska Baptisternas i Wisconsin Missionshistoria,* pp. 32–37.

This took place as early as 1882. Two years later a Baptist church was organized in Marinette, and the first pastor of that congregation, N. J. Nylander, began to hold religious services in Menominee also. The Lord blessed the work, which resulted in the conversion of souls. On August 10, 1887, seventeen of the believers in Menominee, having received letters of transfer from the Marinette church, organized a congregation of their own.[45]

The following year the church experienced a great spiritual uplift as a result of the preaching of the evangelist Amanda Yman. Nineteen converts were immersed and the membership reached 39 in 1888. A reaction however, retarded the progress in the early nineties. This was caused partly by the removal of several members, chiefly young people, to larger cities, and partly by the inroads of Adventism which led to the exclusion even of some of the prominent members of the church.[46] But the Lord did not forsake His people. Under good leadership progress was slow but sure. By 1900 the membership was 62, and 84 in 1951.

It was about 1886 that Swedish Baptists began their activities in Ironwood. Pastor Björkman of Ashland, Wisconsin made frequent visits there which bore fruit in several conversions. Sometime in the summer of 1887 — the exact date is not known — those new converts and the few Baptists who had come over from Värmland, Sweden, organized a Swedish Baptist church. It is supposed that the charter members were twelve in number. In September of 1889 the first baptism took place when three believers were immersed.[47] For a few years prospects looked bright, but in the early nineties a dispersion of the members, due to a lack of work in the city, made the existence of the Ironwood church precarious. The problem, however, in the course of years found a happy solution. The membership increased from 26 in 1907 to 73 in 1922. In the latter year 21 converts were immersed. By 1951 the membership was 126. Two well known pastors among Swedish Baptists, Carl A. Anderson and Axel Lindgren, were ordained to the gospel ministry in the Ironwood church.

On a previous page it has been recorded that a Swedish Baptist church was organized in Norway as early as 1880. Shortly afterward a new mine was opened in Iron Mountain, and as a result many of the people in Norway moved to the neighboring city to find work.

---

[45] *Historik,* Svenska Baptistförsamlingarna i Övre Michigan (MS)., op. cit. See also, *Nya Wecko-Posten,* July 27, 1909

[46] *Historik,* Övre Michigan, op. cit. See also *Nya Wecko-Posten,* September 10, 1907, and *Svenska Standaret,* November 15, 1917.

[47] Ibid.

Practically the whole Baptist church of Norway transferred to Iron Mountain, retaining, however, the original name, Norway Baptist Church, until 1884.[48] The few remaining believers in Norway received some encouragement through occasional visits by the pastor at Iron Mountain. Moreover, some Baptist families from Sweden settled in Norway. On December 2, 1888, a rather large group, thirty-two in all, organized the Swedish Baptist Church of Norway. In the first few years the Baptist cause in Norway prospered. Then, in the middle nineties, discord and misunderstanding almost rent the little group to pieces, resulting in the exclusion of several members.[49] In addition, hard times caused others to move to other parts of the country. The membership was reduced from 72 to 46. Not all of that, however, represented a distinct loss; for a small church had been organized at Hermansville by members from Norway. It required much faith for the handful of Baptists in Norway to continue. It was recorded that in 1904 only four or five persons attended the Sunday morning services. A few years later Pentecostalism almost split the church. In 1911 the membership had been reduced to 45. But God did not remove the candlestick. The faith and labor of pastors and people prevailed, bringing the membership up to 120 by 1951.

In 1883 some of the original members of the Norway-Iron Mountain Baptist Church moved to Bates, near Iron River and settled on farms. J. E. Gronlund, who had served as elder in the Iron Mountain church, was the forerunner in that group, and it was only natural that he should gather the Swedes in Bates and Iron River for religious worship. Seven of the immersed believers banded themselves together and formed the Swedish Baptist Church of Iron River, February 24, 1889.[50] The first preacher was a student pastor by the name of W. A. Peterson, who later for several years served as teacher in the theological seminary at Morgan Park. Showers of divine blessings and hard work produced good results. The membership reached 25 at the end of that summer. The first full time minister was Carl Strandberg who stayed about one year. Long vacancies between the regular pastorates in the early years no doubt retarded the growth and development of the church. After eighteen years only forty members could be mustered. But then, in 1908, a remarkable revival swept through

---

[48] *A Forty Year History of Baptist Work in Norway, Michigan,* 1888–1928, p. 1.

[49] *Historik.* Övre Michigan, op. cit.

[50] *Sixtieth Anniversary History,* 1889–1949, First Baptist Church, Iron River, Mich., (pamphlet form). See also *Historik,* Övre Michigan, op. cit. This gives the date February 29, 1889, which cannot be correct, since 1889 was not a leap year.

Iron River. Many turned to the Lord, and thirty-three converts were immersed and joined the church, bringing the membership up to 76.[51] The next year however, twenty-four members asked for their letters to form a church in Bates, which is a rural community six miles out from Iron River. A few years later the Bates church dissolved and reunited with the mother church. In 1930 the membership record was 37, and with good progress in later years the 1951 report reveals a total membership of 94. In the early years of her history the Iron River church had the joy of seeing three of her young men enter the ministry, namely, Carl A. Anderson, Victor Sandell, and S. J. Peterson.

Being forced by the economic depression in the early nineties to seek other employment, several of the Iron Mountain Baptists settled on homesteads across the state line in Wisconsin about nine miles south of the city. There twenty-two of them organized a church, August 6, 1895, under the name of the Swedish Baptist Church of Homestead. Considerable trouble made their path a thorny one for some time. By 1903 thirteen of the charter members had been excluded from the fellowship of the saints.[52] The question of disbanding as a church was considered. However, the light continued to shine, and in later years a good deal of progress has blessed the efforts.

Some Younger Churches

The church at Escanaba was really started at Whitefish, a farming community some distance to the north of the city, where a Sunday school was begun in 1895. Ministers from the surrounding area often visited the place and held gospel services. Souls were saved, and Baptists from other places also moved in so that after a few years the time became ripe to organize a church. This took place at the Whitefish schoolhouse September 7, 1903. Most of the twenty-two charter members came from Ishpeming, but a few came also from Iron Mountain and Manistique.[53] Six more persons joined the church immediately after the organization, making the number 28. Carl Antonson, well known evangelist among Swedish Baptists, became the first pastor. He received a number of new members into the church. But the apparent outward success seemed to be of a short duration. From a membership of 65 in 1904 a discouraging decline brought the ranks down to 26 in 1919. However, in 1924, with the coming of John Hugo, an aggressive and self-sacrificing young pastor, new hope was injected into the dispirited Escanaba Baptists. A healthy growth during the last twenty-five years has resulted in a strong and active church with 124 members in 1951.

---

[51] Records, Iron River Baptist Church.

[52] Records, Homestead Baptist Church.

[53] Records, Escanaba Baptist Church. See also Annuals, General Conference.

Undoubtedly, A. A. Hammar, pastor in Ishpeming 1884–1890, was the first Swedish Baptist preacher to proclaim the gospel in Marquette. Other ministers continued the good work for a number of years. The Swedish Baptist church of Marquette was organized December 13, 1903, of eighteen charter members.[54] After two years the membership was 27, exactly the same number as at the tenth anniversary of the church. In 1930 it had reached a membership of 66, and in 1951 it was 71.

In Gladstone a Swedish Baptist church was formed in 1905. By 1951 the membership had reached 86. The church at Felch returned to the General Conference fellowship in 1945. It was originally organized as a Swedish Baptist church, October 14, 1900, but cooperated with the Swedish Finnish Baptist Union for a number of years. In the year 1946 there were two new churches organized in Upper Michigan, one at Bergland and the other at Ontonagon.

CHURCHES IN WISCONSIN

Two of the Wisconsin churches, Trade Lake and Wood River, were organized before 1870, and their story has been told in an earlier chapter (Ch. Eight). With the exception of the church in Kenosha which has joined the Illinois Conference, all of the Wisconsin churches are located in the northern part of the state, and geographically may be divided into four groups. Their combined membership is approximately the same as that of lower Michigan.

NORTHEASTERN WISCONSIN

In the northeastern part of Wisconsin there is a long and narrow peninsula, projecting out into Lake Michigan. It is separated from the mainland by Green Bay. There, in the extreme northern point of the peninsula, lies beautiful Sister Bay, which as early as 1870 began to attract the Swedes who were seeking a home in the New World. Anders Seaquist was the trail blazer. He arrived in 1870,[55] locating at Ephraim, about three miles from Sister Bay. Being a believer in the Lord and His Word, he began a Sunday school for the new settlers' children, which met in the various homes of the community. About 1873 John Anderson arrived together with his family. The two pioneers cooperated beautifully in spreading the gospel; Seaquist spoke to the children, and Anderson, who had some preaching experience from Sweden, preached to the older people.[56] This independent mission continued until 1877.

---

[54] Records, Marquette Baptist Church.

[55] *Nya Wecko-Posten*, July 16, 1907: Article by C. R. Seaquist. Ole Ellison in *Svenska Baptisternas i Wisconsin Missionshistoria* says that A. Seaquist arrived in 1868. p. 21.

In that year A. P. Ekman, who a few years later became general missionary of the Swedish Baptist General Conference, came to Sister Bay to serve as student pastor that summer. He found eight Baptists and advised them to organize themselves into a New Testament church. This was done July 19, 1877, making the Sister Bay church the third oldest Swedish Baptist church in Wisconsin. Six believers were immersed the same day, making the charter members fourteen in number. John Anderson was elected to preach, or to read some of Spurgeon's sermons,[57] a practice which often prevailed at that time. In 1881 the small church took the courageous step to call a minister who could devote all his time to the preaching of the gospel. Charles Wassell became that man, and he remained as pastor of the Sister Bay Church for twenty-five years and two months.

CHARLES WASSELL

Among pioneer Baptist preachers in the state of Wisconsin, Wassell ranks high, and in length of service in one church he has been surpassed by very few in the entire history of Swedish Baptists. He was born near the city of Örebro, Sweden December 13, 1833. After a prolonged period of intense spiritual struggle in which he tried to produce a righteousness by works and in his own strength, he experienced, at the age of 26, the liberating power of God's redeeming grace by which the problem of sin found a permanent and satisfactory solution. Through a careful study of the New Testament both he and his wife were led to follow Christ in immersion, after which they united with the Baptist church at Västerås, where they lived then. Urged by a divine constraint to witness for his Lord, the young man soon began to preach the gospel. His first sermon was based on the beautiful words in I John 3:1–3. The Word bore fruit in the conversion of lost souls. The preacher suffered persecution, being brought before both ecclesiastical and secular courts. At one time the sheriff took Wassell's only cow in lieu of heavy fines which the poor minister could not pay. Persecutions, however, only added fuel to the fire, for it was a fire of the Holy Spirit. Wassell continued to witness for his Lord with great boldness.[58] He served four different Baptist churches in the province of Västmanland, Sweden, while he also kept busy as an itinerant evangelist.

---

[56] *Fifty Years History,* of the Baptist Church, Sister Bay, Wis., 1877–1927, p. 5.

[57] Ibid., p. 6.

But the hospitable shores of America, where so many of Wassell's friends and neighbors had found a haven of refuge, became too attractive for him. At forty-eight years of age, he emigrated with his family to the United States, with the intention of locating on a farm near Stromsburg, Nebraska. But God had other plans! When he reached Chicago John Ongman, then pastor of the First Swedish Baptist Church, urged him to go to Sister Bay, Wisconsin, and take up the gospel work there. Wassell considered that advice a call from God, and he went to Sister Bay, little realizing at that time that the call meant a life work. The church had only eighteen members and all of them of meagre incomes. But they had faith and courage to invite the preacher to stay. Wassell, however, soon realized that he could not support his family on a salary of two hundred dollars a year. Therefore, in order to help eke out a living, he bought a farm on which he lived for twenty-three years.[59]

Charles Wassell possessed a sturdy Christian character. He had strong convictions on the Bible doctrines of conversion, baptism, and church organization, and believed that God would establish His kingdom at Sister Bay by these agencies. He succeeded very well, and the church as well as the whole community felt that they had a man of God in their midst. At the age of 73, in 1906, he terminated his long and faithful ministry in Sister Bay. In their declining years he and his wife found a good home and tender care in Chicago with the daughter and son-in-law, Pastor Charles Palm.[60] Quietly the saintly servant of God fell asleep February 6, 1914, at the age of eighty.

Younger pastors who have continued the Lord's work in Sister Bay have had the advantage of building on the good foundation laid by Wassell. At the fiftieth anniversary of the church in 1927 the membership had reached 198, and 258 in 1951.

Wassell, who was a true pioneer, was not content to confine his work to Sister Bay only. In the surrounding area, at Ellison Bay, Rowlers Bay and Ephraim, he held services whenever possible. In the time of his immediate successor, L. J. Olson, February 18, 1907, the church decided to establish a mission at Newport. A Sunday school was begun there the same spring, and a commodious house of worship was erected in 1924. On May 27, 1928, thirty-six members of the Sister Bay church received letters of transfer from the mother church and organized a Swedish Baptist church at Newport, or Ellison Bay. It is of more than passing interest to note that the secretary of that meeting at Newport, John R. Seaquist, was a grandson of Anders Seaquist, who acted as secretary when the Sister Bay church was formed in 1877. A son-in-law of Wassell and, in many respects, a spiritual son of the Sister Bay church, the lovable Charles Palm, became the first pastor of the Newport church.

---

[58] C. W. Sundmark, in *Nya Wecko-Postens Kalender,* 1915, pp. 169–173. See also *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Feb. 17 and 24, and March 3, 1914.

[59] *Fifty Years History,* op. cit., p. 8.

[60] Ibid., p. 8.

Largely as an outgrowth of missionary work done by the Ellison Bay and the Sister Bay churches, a third church was organized in 1943 at Sturgeon Bay on the Door county peninsula.

NORTH CENTRAL WISCONSIN

In this area there are three Conference churches: Ogema, Prentice, and Spirit. In 1880 a large group of Swedish immigrants, not less than fifty-four persons at one time, took homesteads in the Ogema district. Practically all came from Kil and Frykerud in the province of Värmland.[61] Having come under the influence of a sweeping revival in Sweden, these immigrants, true to the nature of Christianity, were anxious to spread the gospel light on the American frontier. They met for spiritual edification in primitive log cabins as well as in the schoolhouse. On July 12, 1880, the Ogema Swedish Baptist Church was organized with seventeen charter members.[62] During the first two years a spirit of dissension caused no little disturbance among the believers. However, with the coming of the irenic O. S. Lindberg in 1882 as the first pastor, and under his wise leadership, peace was soon restored, being climaxed in a great love feast. In the years of the second pastor, G. Lundquist, 1884–1888, a sweeping revival visited Ogema, resulting in many conversions. Between thirty and forty believers followed Christ in baptism at that time. Everything looked promising. A house of worship and a parsonage were erected a few years later. In the late nineties internal discord again almost ruined the church. After several business meetings and councils, seventeen members were excluded from the congregation at one time.[63] O. S. Lindberg was asked to return in order to heal the breach and rally the scattered forces. "He came and saw and conquered." In the providence of God the church survived.

---

[61] Ellison, *Baptisterna i Wisconsin,* op. cit., p. 25

[62] Records, Ogema Baptist Church. See also *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Aug. 29, 1905.

From the viewpoint of human relationship, it would be interesting to make a careful study of the Ogema situation. According to a contemporary observer, one thing seems to be sure, namely, that the Swedish Baptists of that community were no more contentious than other mortals. The basic reason for the strife should rather be ascribed to the fact that many of the people were profound thinkers of the dogmatic type and possessed of a strong will.[64] They would not budge an inch. But God's grace mellowed the hearts of those staunch pioneers, and divine love finally prevailed.

In missionary interest the Ogema church reached out to surrounding communities, such as Prentice, Westboro, and Brannan (Spirit), where congregations were organized also. The Westboro church disbanded some years ago, however. At the turn of the century, the Ogema church had a membership of 90. A considerable reduction left only thirty-two members in 1921. However, from that time a steady and healthy development caused the membership to reach a high of 150 in 1951.

The beginning of Swedish Baptist work in Prentice was in Worcester, some miles to the north, which later served as a mission station to the Prentice church. It was in 1882 that O. S. Lindberg, the first pastor of the Ogema church, came up to the Worcester settlement to hold his first religious service there. Having reached the place, he became suddenly ill and was unable to preach. But a layman by the name of Emil Johnson, who had accompanied him, read the Scriptures, and led in prayer, and a few hymns were sung.[65] That was the inauspicious beginning of the Prentice Baptist Church. Repeated preaching tours, both by Lindberg and his successors in Ogema, brought a rich harvest of souls. Many turned to the Lord and were immersed. Meanwhile the Prentice settlement grew from a few buildings to a town of considerable size, and a considerable number of the Swedish Baptists located in that area. Thirty-eight of these formed the Prentice Baptist Church July 12, 1891, all of them except one coming from the Ogema church. A. F. Palm ministered as the first pastor in Prentice,

---

[63] Ellison, op. cit., p. 28

[64] Ellison, op. cit., p. 31

[65] *Twenty-five Years History* of the Prentice Baptist Church (MS). See also Ellison, op. cit., pp. 53–57.

1891–1893. The historian of the church, August G. Morner, records that toward the end of that incumbency the relationship between pastor and church became somewhat strained, in consequence of which the preacher resigned. Significantly, however, the writer adds: "It must be admitted that Pastor Palm laid the foundation for a sound interpretation of the substitutionary death of Christ, which in our time is so important."[66] That affirmation might safely be made of the Conference Baptist preachers as a group; Swedish Baptist churches have no other foundation.

As in most of the churches, periodic revivals occurred. But the number of the saints in the Prentice church, as in most smaller towns and rural areas, increased slowly because the young people migrated to the larger cities in search of work. At the turn of the century the membership was 67, and at the twenty-fifth anniversary of the church in 1916, it had reached 91 and 110 in 1951.

An episode of more than ordinary interest, and probably characteristic of many churches in the pioneer era, occurred at one of the early annual business meetings in the Prentice church. In the course of the election of officers a member remarked, "What about the Sunday school superintendent?" The incumbent superintendent replied, "It is not necessary to discuss the office of Sunday school superintendent, unless you desire to dismiss me. For I feel it is my calling, by God's grace, to teach the children."[67]

The third church in the North Central district was organized at Brannan, some miles to the east of Ogema, in 1892. The church is now known as the Baptist Church of Spirit. A number of student pastors have faithfully proclaimed Christ in that beautiful rural community.

NORTHERN WISCONSIN

In the northern part of the state there are six Swedish Baptist churches, namely, Ashland, Superior, Lake Nebagamon, Oulu, Wentworth, and Mason.

Just when the first Swedish Baptists settled in Ashland cannot be definitely determined. It is known, however, that some time before 1883 A. P. Ekman, at that time General Conference missionary, conducted the first Swedish Baptist preaching mission in northern Wisconsin. O. S. Lindberg of Ogema also preached the gospel in Ashland several times in the early eighties. The believers were encouraged, and

[66] *History* of Prentice Baptist Church, op. cit.

[67] Ibid.

several turned to the Lord. On July 8, 1883, a Swedish Baptist church of eleven members was formed in Ashland, two of whom were immersed that same day.[68] That was the first foreign language church of any denomination in Ashland and vicinity. Apparently the future had great possibilities for a strong Baptist work. To begin with, a gifted layman by the name of E. Erickson led the services. Then, between 1885 and 1890, four pastors, J. O. Bjorkman, J. S. Cederberg, Carl Strandberg, and Paul Johnson served the church, each for a brief period. More than fifty members were added to the church in those years.

But the success was not to be enjoyed for long. In the spring of 1890 strife broke out among the members with the result that some were excluded from church fellowship, and thirteen others asked to be dropped from the church. Those, too, were excluded. The disfellowshipped saints met and organized a new congregation and called G. Lundquist as their pastor. His first task was to effect a reconciliation between the two churches. In this he was eminently successful, no doubt because he proceeded in a Scriptural and the only proper way. A meeting was called for mutual confession and forgiveness, and it was agreed to disband both the churches and organize a new one. That took place December 14, 1890, when the Salem Baptist Church was organized with forty-five charter members. In those years Ashland had a considerable influx of Swedish people who came to work in the sawmills and on the ore docks. Many of these came to hear Pastor Lundquist proclaim the gospel to great crowds in the Baptist church. A new sanctuary was erected and dedicated to divine service in the spring of 1892.[69] By the end of that year the membership had increased to 107,[70] and the Swedish Baptist church exercised a strong spiritual influence in the community. Another period of trials, however, was in the offing. Due to the disastrous economic depression in the middle nineties, many of the members found it impossible to redeem the pledges made toward the new building, and the church suffered financial difficulties for a number of years. Even worse was the fact that the spiritual life declined in a marked degree and brotherly love reached a low ebb. Twenty members asked to be dropped, of whom eighteen were excluded from church fellowship. The sad experience of former years lived again in Ashland.

---

[68] Ellison, op. cit., p. 47. *A Brief History of the Salem Baptist Church,* Ashland, Wis., 1890–1940, p. 6.

[69] *History,* Salem Baptist Church, op. cit., p. 8.

[70] *Historical Sketch* of the first thirty-seven years, Ashland Baptist Church (MS). See also *Svenska Standaret,* Jan. 12, 1926.

But every cloud has its silver lining. During the trying days in the period that followed Lundquist's resignation in the fall of 1896, a consecrated layman, known as Deacon Andrew Larson, did a heroic piece of work in order to keep the small group together. From his humble home in Highland, about five miles from the city, he walked to church every Sunday and preached the gospel. It was a round trip of over ten miles, and sometimes twenty miles, when he returned home for lunch between morning and evening services. For nearly a year and a half, over rough and often muddy roads, through sunshine, rain, sleet, and snow, Larson continued his ministry of sacrificial love without any material remuneration.[71] In pioneer days such experiences were frequent in the churches which prospered under the leadership of talented God fearing laymen. Deacon Larson's work was signally blessed by the Lord of the harvest, and the Ashland church survived.

A few years later when Pentecostalism threatened disruption it was again Deacon Larson's wise and constructive leadership which gave doctrinal and spiritual stability to the saints. By means of missionary work in surrounding areas the Ashland church throughout the years has enlarged its influence. In 1929 it had a membership of 243, and in 1951 it had four Sunday schools with an enrollment of 376. It is a field of almost unlimited possibilities for a strong evangelical work.

In Superior the winter of 1887–1888 was extremely cold with an abundance of snow. The thermometer registered 10 to 20 degrees below zero most of the winter, except when the reading was 35 to 40 below. The rootage of Swedish Baptist work dates back to that severe winter. On the invitation of Andrew Hammerbeck, who had arrived in Superior September 12, 1887, a group of young people from the Temple Baptist Church of Duluth came across the ice to conduct a religious service in Superior. Return visits were made, and the spiritual seed planted took root and bore fruit. Later in the spring Erick Beckman, at that time missionary in Wisconsin, also preached the gospel in Superior.[72]

A Swedish Baptist church of six charter members was organized August 1, 1888. Erick Beckman became the first pastor and served without salary.[73] Not less than seventeen pastors are listed the first fifty years, undoubtedly too many to do effective work; this averages less than three years each. A rare characterization of that group of pastors, made by the author of the fifty years history of the church, is worth recording:

---

[71] *History* Salem Baptist Church. op. cit., p. 8.

[72] *Fifty-Year Survey* of Ogden Avenue Baptist Church, Superior, Wis., 1888–1938 (MS), p. 2.

[73] O. Ellison, op. cit., p. 42.

> As is usually the case in any church's history, the pastors were variously gifted. There were singers, organizers, administrators, plodders, poets, humorists, philosophers, expositors, evangelists, orators, personal workers, enthusiasts, genial personalities, kindly dispositions, serious-minded men, energetic dynamos, backward-looking, forward-looking, inward-looking, able preachers and less able preachers. They were tall and short, slender and stout, young and old, Swedish and less Swedish. They rode various kinds of hobbies, had various outstanding characteristics and mannerisms. Each and all were used by God in building up the church, in training its membership, in winning souls, and in serving the community.[74]

What made the Superior church especially known throughout the whole denomination was its unfortunate experience in church building. The first meetinghouse was built in 1888–1889, and the second one on the same site in 1900. In 1922 plans were made for a new sanctuary, the present one. The pastor at that time was young, enthusiastic and optimistic, and the church responded to his leadership, giving itself with wholehearted abandon to the task. In September of 1923, the church celebrated its thirty-fifth anniversary by dedicating the new temple. However, someone had failed to plan carefully. They had not considered the cost but had built far beyond the means and financial ability of the membership. A heavy encumbrance had a stranglehold on the church for many years, which undoubtedly would have meant the loss of the property and probably the dissolution of the congregation, had it not been for the generosity of the General Conference, as well as other Conference churches in contributing thousands of dollars to the Superior church.[75] It should be a lesson to all churches never to build beyond their means. The labor and sacrifice of the faithful few, however, have not been in vain. A bright day has dawned in Superior.

In the eighties and early nineties some Swedish Baptists from Duluth located on farms near Lake Nebagamon, Wisconsin, about twenty-five miles southeast of Superior. On March 28, 1894, a church was organized of fifteen charter members.[76] By the turn of the century the membership had increased to 60. A shifting in the population, however, from the farm to the large cities caused a decline in membership over several years. Recently, however, a healthy growth and expansion betoken good prospects for the future. Moreover, it is a source of great comfort to Kingdom builders that no matter how small and limited a church may be, it can still be a lighthouse in the community and exert an influence even to the ends of the earth. That was true in the case of the Lake Nebagamon church. For in the midst of that group of believers there grew up a little lad who, at a tender age, surrendered his life to Christ and Christian service. This boy was destined to become an educator, a foreign missionary, and the first foreign missions secretary of Swedish Baptists. The name of the boy is Walfred Danielson. An older man in the church befriended the little fellow and became a big brother to him, helping him to steady the spiritual walk of the young Christian. Frequently he would ask, "Well, my little brother, how is it going?" The boy smiled and grew strong in the Lord. That is a service that every Christian can render!

---

[74] *Fifty Year Survey,* op. cit., p. 4.

[75] Ibid., pp. 4, 6

[76] O. Ellison, op. cit., pp. 64–66

A short distance northeast of Lake Nebagamon is the Oulu settlement composed largely of people from Finland. A few Swedish Baptists from Wakefield, Michigan, located on farms in Oulu in the early nineties. They banded themselves together and formed a church in 1895.[77] Due mostly to the circumscribed nature of the field, the group has always remained small, but the gospel light, nevertheless has continued to burn with a steady flame in the Oulu area. To the north of Lake Nebagamon another church was organized, near Wentworth, in 1921. The members are mostly Swedish Finnish in nationality.

In a rural community west of Mason and eighteen miles southwest of Ashland another Conference Baptist church was organized November 15, 1907.[78] The twenty charter members all came from the Ashland church. For several years preceding the actual formation of the church in Mason, the spiritual soil of the field had been well prepared by a Sunday school conducted by Ole Holmgren and others. Deacon Andrew Larson of Ashland also made frequent preaching tours to the settlement, and many turned to the Lord as a result of his ministry. Ole Holmgren was a typical farmer-preacher, exceptionally gifted as a speaker and a leader. From the beginning of the church and for nearly twenty years he served as pastor. This he did with much success and with unusual tact and wisdom. Although he had never attended any schools, not even ordinary grade school, he was a well read man and he knew his Bible almost by heart. Probably Holmgren did not know the meaning of the word psychology, but in the field of applied psychology he had few equals. He possessed much sanctified common sense, and approached and led people in the spirit of kindness and love. His home, too, was a veritable Bethany, where itinerant preachers and others were hospitably entertained. Deep and strong and with much sacrifice this farmer preacher laid the foundation of the Mason church, and a younger generation continues to build the superstructure.

---

[77] Ellison, op. cit., pp. 71–72.

[78] Records Mason Baptist Church.

NORTHWESTERN WISCONSIN

In an earlier chapter (Ch. Eight) the story was told of the beginning of Swedish Baptist work in Wisconsin, and the formation of the two oldest churches, Trade Lake and Wood River. At present there are four other Conference Baptist churches in this area, namely, Grantsburg, Webster, East Balsam, and Falun.

Grantsburg was the county seat and the only town in Burnette county, and immediately after the railroad was finished in 1884 it began to take on a more prosperous appearance. Trade became quite brisk as people from all over the county would come to town to do their shopping. It was therefore felt that Grantsburg ought to become the center of Baptist work in the county. As early as 1869 or 1870, two Swedish Baptist families by the name of Olof Olson and A. P. Sundberg located there. Olson homesteaded 80 acres of land adjacent to the village on the west, and Sundberg built the first dwelling in the jackpine forest north of the river. A. Ahlstrom also settled in Grantsburg about the same time, and in the spring of 1871 he started a Sunday school in the village. Meetings were held in the homes of Olson and Sundberg from the first. Moreover, the Wood River Baptist church had extended its mission work westward to Grantsburg, and some of its members lived there.[79]

With the coming, in the spring of 1883, of the youthful and enthusiastic J. P. Sundstrom as pastor of the Wood River church, the Baptist work at Grantsburg took on a more regular and definite character, including Sunday evening services and a midweek prayer meeting. Like the apostles of old, the pioneer Baptist preacher had to make good use of his legs. According to Sundstrom:

> The only transportation was to walk back and forth between the places. There, again, we took up the Prairie church as an outstation. I then preached at Wood River in the morning, walked eight miles to Prairie and preached there at 4 p.m., and then walked back to Grantsburg and

---

[79] *Golden Jubilee* of Swedish Baptist Conference of Wisconsin and Grantsburg Swedish Baptist Church, 1884–1934. pp. 27, 31.

> preached there in the evening, and after the evening service walked back to Wood River. That Sunday I would preach three times and walk between 16 and 18 miles. After that day's work I was pretty tired, but I was very happy in the work. We had some members out at Mudhen Lake, and they wanted some meetings out there occasionally, and the only way to get there was to walk. Now and then, too, Trade Lake was visited, always on foot.[80]

The work at Grantsburg was blessed with some conversions and baptisms so that toward the end of the summer of 1884 it was felt the time had come to organize. Before that was done, however, it was suggested to the families at Wood River that the church should move into town. But they would not entertain any such notion. In later years other attempts, equally fruitless, have been made to merge the work of the two churches, Wood River and Grantsburg, which are hardly four miles apart.

On September 24, 1884, nineteen members of the Wood River church organized the Swedish Baptist Church of Grantsburg.[81] It was the first city Baptist church in Burnette county, and at least two of its charter members were real pioneers, namely, A. G. Anderson, who had walked from Chicago to Grantsburg in February, 1869, and A. Ahlstrom, who was the first man of Swedish birth to be immersed in Wisconsin. Sundstrom continued to serve the two churches, Wood River and Grantsburg, until August, 1886. In the time of his immediate successor, Paul Johnson, a spiritual revival refreshed the church, and in February of 1888 the pastor immersed sixteen converts in the river after a two and one half foot ice covering had been removed.[82]

Throughout the years the Grantsburg church has experienced a sound though not a rapid growth. At all times it has been held in high regard in the community, and has exerted an influence far beyond the local borders. Probably an overchurched condition in the town and its immediate surroundings, and a keen competition, have tended to keep the membership number at a low point. Seldom has this exceeded one hundred. For example, in 1902 Grantsburg, with a population of 600, had six churches in town and six more only a few miles from town, all Scandinavian except one.[83] At the turn of the century the church had a membership of 79 — twenty-eight men and fifty-one women. By 1948 the membership had risen to 114. A group of missionary minded

[80] Ibid, p. 26

[81] Ibid., p. 32. See also Ellison op. cit., pp. 37–40. *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Oct. 11, 1904. Ahlstrom, *Historiska Skildringar,* op. cit. pp. 178–187.

[82] *Golden Jubilee,* op. cit., p. 32.

[83] Ellison, op. cit., pp. 39–40.

members, both men and women, have been a great blessing to the Grantsburg church through the years. Best known among these is the late Philip Carlson, who was not only a very progressive leader within the local church, but also very active in the Wisconsin Conference and the principal founder and promoter of the Wood Lake Assembly.

The Swedish Baptist church at Webster, formerly known as the Clam River Valley Church, was organized December 18, 1897. Most of the charter members came from the Mudhen Lake Church, which was originally named the Wood Lake Baptist Church. P. E. Swanstrom, pioneer preacher in the Wood River Church, was the first Swedish Baptist minister to preach the gospel in the Clam River area, and he became the first pastor of the Clam River Valley Church. He visited the place once a month. However, more than anyone else, it was really the fearless and energetic district missionary, F. O. Carlson, who broke the spiritual ground among the settlers in the Webster area, just as he did in so many other places in Burnette and Polk counties in northwestern Wisconsin. Several churches, some of which later dissolved or merged with other churches, owe their origin directly or indirectly to Carlson's labors.[84] When the Soo Line Railway was built, some three or four miles east of the Clam River Valley Church, a station was located where the present town of Webster is situated. After some years a house of worship was erected in Webster, the Swedish Baptists being the first to establish Christian work there, and the name of the church was changed to the Webster Baptist Church. In the early thirties the church experienced an ephemeral success in which the membership suddenly jumped to 119 in 1935. A reaction, however, soon reduced the number to 60.

The place where the East Balsam church is located was originally known as Bunyan, and until quite recently the church also bore that name. It would indicate that the Swedish pioneers who settled at the eastern end of beautiful Balsam Lake had read Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" and that they were Christians. The Swedish Baptist church at El Salem, organized in 1894 and in recent years having transferred its fellowship to the Conservative Baptist Association, had cultivated the East Balsam field as a mission for a few years. On October 9, 1904, the time was considered ripe to organize a church. It was composed of twenty charter members, all from El Salem. For several years the two churches were served by the same pastor. The labors of talented laymen within the church as well as regular visits by Missionary

---

[84] Ellison, op. cit., pp. 73–74. Ahlstrom, *Historiska Skildringar,* op. cit., 239–243. *Svenska Standaret,* Dec. 13, 1917.

F. O. Carlson did much to promote the work in East Balsam. In recent years, with a pastor devoting full time to the field, the prospects have greatly improved.

The East Balsam church has a distinction which, as far as is known, is not accorded any other Conference Baptist church. John Huss, its first clerk, who faithfully served in that capacity for a number of years, was a direct descendant of the great reformer of Bohemia, John Huss, whom the Catholic church burned at the stake as a heretic July 6, 1415. At that time some of the Huss family escaped to Sweden, and in the latter half of the nineteenth century several of them joined the stream of immigrants to the New World. Thus it happened that another John Huss became a charter member of the Bunyan church.[85]

Falun undoubtedly received its name from the city of Falun in Dalarne, Sweden. A few members of the Mudhen Lake church had located in the village of Falun and built a meetinghouse there even before a congregation was formed. Seven of them organized the Swedish Baptist Church of Falun August 14, 1909. To begin with, the church shared its pastor with the mother church at Mudhen Lake. After 1924, when the Mudhen Lake Church disbanded and joined Falun, the Wood River and Falun churches were served by the same student pastor for a number of years. The membership in 1951 was 47.

[85] Ahlstrom, *Historiska Skildringar,* op. cit., pp. 249–250.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

CHURCHES IN THE EASTERN AREA

In earlier chapters of this work the beginning of Swedish immigration to America has been recorded. In that connection it was observed that the first Swedish immigrants in the eighteen-fifties and sixties, for the most part, located in the Middle West, in the states of Illinois, Iowa, and Minnesota. Before the eighteen-seventies, comparatively few Swedes remained on the Atlantic Seaboard. New York, being the main entry port, naturally would attract some of the newcomers. It is significant, however, that the first Swedish Lutheran Church of New York City was not organized until 1865,[1] only two years before the Swedish Baptist Church of that city was formed. Brockton, Massachusetts, originally two small cities, Campello and North Bridgewater, is the oldest Swedish colony of New England. Through the influence of one Daniel Larson, who located in Brockton 1844, a number of other Swedes settled there in the fifties and sixties. Boston, too, by 1860 had a few hundred Swedish inhabitants, but no organized religious work of any kind.[2]

NEW ENGLAND

In the 1951–52 Annual of the General Conference there are listed 16 churches in the territory covered by the New England Conference, with a combined membership of 2,862. Twelve of these churches are located in Massachusetts, two in Maine, one in Rhode Island, and one in New Hampshire.[3]

New Sweden, Maine

It may seem strange that the first Swedish Baptist church to be organized on the east coast, next to the one in New York City, was in the remote regions of northern Maine. Its origin is intimately related to the founding of the Swedish colony in that part of the state which was brought to pass by the philanthropist W. W. Thomas, United States minister to Sweden at that time. He succeeded in having a number of poor Swedish immigrants settle on homesteads in the northeastern part of the state of Maine, where they would enjoy the same energizing nordic climate to which they were accustomed in the mother country. The first Swedish settlers arrived there July 23, 1870, the group consisting of 51 persons — 22 men, 11 women and 18 children. It was not surprising that they named their colony New Sweden. Other settlements with Swedish names such as Stockholm and Jämtland were formed later on.

---

[1] E. Norelius, op. cit., p. 770.

[2] Ibid., p. 771.

[3] *Annual,* Baptist General Conference of America, 1951–1952. When the Eastern Conference divided into the New York and New England conferences in 1899 Connecticut went with the New York Conference, p. 137.

In the original group there were some immersed believers. In old Sweden they had suffered persecution and the spoiling of their goods because they were Baptists. Here, on this side of the Atlantic, in New Sweden, they were to enjoy complete religious liberty and were to have freedom to worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience. Little wonder, therefore, that upon the arrival at their destination, as the golden sunset spread a halo over the beautiful landscape, Nils Olson, their leader, bared his head and in a fervent prayer poured out his soul to God for divine blessings upon them all and the new settlement.[4] It was a colony founded with prayer and worship. As soon as the people of Baptist faith had had time to orient themselves to their new environment, they began to consider the advisability of forming a church. This was done March 4, 1871, with eight charter members. It was the first Swedish Baptist church in the state of Maine, and the second one east of Chicago.[5] Nils Olson, who had served as an elder of a Baptist church in Sweden, and who also was one of the leading men of the new colony, was elected leader of the small group of immersed believers.

Due to a substantial influx of Baptists from Sweden, the church received an addition of 37 new members on July 15, 1871, and by the end of that year, only ten months after the formation of the church, the membership had reached 64. The first New Testament baptism in New Sweden took place July 14, 1872, in the Madawaska River. In 1875 a great revival swept through the church and the whole community. Among many beneficial results of the spiritual awakening, the church received an addition of 29 new members by means of baptism, and the arrival of still more Baptists from Sweden brought the membership up to 102 at the end of that year. However, the great victory was not to go unchallenged by the enemy of the saints. A disastrous reaction set in. Strange and unbiblical doctrines crept in among the Baptists. This led to the exclusion of 26 members from the fellowship of the church the very same year that the great revival had come. The following year 27 more members had to be disfellowshipped. Things went from bad to worse until by 1880 the church reached the point of almost complete dissolution. What greatly aggravated the situation was the fact that the pastor himself, who had served the church for many years, wavered in his faith concerning the deity of the Lord Jesus, and had to be excluded from the church November 15, 1879.[6]

---

[4] *Fyrtio-Års Historik,* 1871–1911, Över Svenska Baptistförsamlingen i New Sweden, Maine, p. 5.

[5] Ibid., p. 7. See also *Seventieth Anniversary History,* 1871–1941, First Swedish Baptist Church, New Sweden, Me., p. 7.

However, the spiritual instinct of self-preservation prevailed in the New Sweden Church. Nils Olson, the faithful leader, gathered the fragments of the congregation for a meeting in his home in February, 1881. Thirty-eight members prayed and confessed their sins and humbled themselves before God. They were all of one accord, and God heard their prayers and graciously sent another revival. Within two weeks some sixty persons in the colony professed faith in God and passed from darkness to light.[7] A preacher from Sweden by the name of P. A. Englund piloted the ship of the New Sweden Church with a steady hand for the next seven years, and the Lord crowned with success the soul winning zeal of the pioneers and their leader. By 1890 the membership had increased to 125, and five years later to 159. In 1895 a large and beautiful house of worship with a seating capacity of 400 replaced the old meetinghouse. In later years the church has succeeded in holding the fort, having a membership of 161 in 1951. As a result of its missionary activity in that area other fields were cultivated. In one of them, at Stockholm, a Swedish Baptist church was organized November 5, 1904 of 17 persons, all of whom came from the New Sweden church.

The Boston Area

Boston, the Athens of America as it is often denominated, became the third center of Swedish Baptist work on the east coast. Probably the first Swedish Baptist in Boston, at least the first one to become identified with Swedish Baptist work, was Albertina Bergman, who in 1869 was married to Frank Hanson. She arrived in Boston 1864, having been immersed in Sweden the year before, and Hanson came to Boston 1868, being immersed in Tremont Temple in 1873.[8] The Hanson home became a nucleus of religious influence where other Swedish believers gathered for prayer meetings and spiritual edification. After the arrival of Lauritz Johanson August 21, 1871, who became the real founder of Swedish Baptist work in Boston, a mission was opened in The Baptist Bethel on Hanover Street. In this mission a number of Swedes were converted, and a few were immersed. Through the interposition of K. A. Ostergren, then a young student at Newton Theological Institution, the mission was moved to the Tremont Temple in the fall of 1873. By 1874, twenty-nine converts of the Swedish mission had joined the great Baptist church of Tremont Temple.[9]

---

[6] *Fyrtio-Års Historik,* op. cit., p. 8.

[7] *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* op. cit., 1881, p. 59. *Fyrtio-Års Historik,* op. cit., p. 9.

Soon the time seemed ripe to organize a Swedish Baptist church in Boston, which took place January 16, 1875, in the home of pastor Johanson. A strange situation, and unique in the whole history of Swedish Baptists, pertained to this organization of fifteen charter members. For the members of the Swedish church retained their membership in the Tremont Temple church until July 21, 1896, thus being members of two churches at the same time.[10] The Swedish church sustained a sort of subordinate, or branch relationship to the mother church, while at the same time it exercised all the normal functions of an independent church, such as the calling of pastors, election of officers, receiving and dismissing of members, and supporting, at least largely so, its own work.[11] Whether this dual nature of the Swedish Baptist group — church or mission — at Boston promoted or hindered true progress, is not easy to determine. It is a fact, however, that Lauritz Johanson, the first pastor of the church (mission), who continued his ministry in Boston until 1878, received 70 new members, 47 of these by baptism.[12] At the same time the evangelistic pastor made frequent and extensive preaching tours to many of the surrounding towns and cities, such as Worcester, Lowell, Providence, Newport, and Quincy.

---

[8] *Femtioårs-Jubileums Minnesbok,* Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Boston, Mass., 1875–1925, pp. 5–6.

[9] *Minnesblad Efter Fyrtio År,* Boston Första Svenska Baptisförsamlingen, 1875–1915, pp. 6–7. See also *Zions Wakt,* July 1875.

[10] *Femtio-års Minnesbok,* op. cit., p. 7. *Minnesblad,* op. cit., pp. 7–8.

[11] It is significant that Axel Tjernlund, who served as pastor in Boston, 1880–1885 and 1888–1897, in writing in Evangelisk Tidskrift, March 4, 1881, p. 70, does not use the word "church," but "a little Swedish Baptist Mission." Undoubtedly that is historically correct. The Tremont Temple church, too, considered the Swedish church as its "mission." See *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* 1882, p. 55.

[12] *Minnesblad,* op. cit., p. 9.

To fill the place left vacant by Pastor Johanson, a call was extended to Olof Lindh, pioneer preacher of the Middle West, who was then in 1878 living in Sweden. He accepted the call and arrived in Boston August 15, 1879. The following night Lindh heard the fire alarms in the city and discovered in the morning that Tremont Temple had gone through a baptism of fire, thereby also reducing to ashes the home of the Swedish Baptist Church. Lindh was perplexed for a while, not knowing what to do. As a stranger in the city he felt himself unequal to cope with such a difficult situation and left Boston within a week. For the small group of Swedish Baptists this became a period of severe trials. Being without a church home and also without leadership, the more fainthearted in the group considered everything lost and pulled back. Others abandoned the Swedish work and went to the Americans, and still others lost their spiritual interest altogether. A few, however, remained faithful and refused to give up. They continued to hold services and wait for brighter days to come.[13]

That brighter day was already in the offing. For in the month of May, 1880, the youthful and aggressive Axel Tjernlund, who the same spring at the age of twenty-six had been graduated from Edgren's Seminary, arrived in Boston and assumed leadership of the dispirited group. In the providence of God Tjernlund was destined to serve the Boston church as pastor nearly fourteen years, 1880–1885 and 1888–1897. As a wise builder he laid a good spiritual foundation for Swedish Baptist work in Boston and the entire surrounding district. To be sure, the beginning was not exceptionally encouraging for the young preacher. Only forty-two names could be found on the church records, and that number had to be reduced considerably in order to put the congregation in good working condition. No large crowds gathered for the public services. During the first year the Sunday morning worship had an attendance varying from five to fifteen. But God was in their midst, and lost souls found the new life in Christ. Not less than 91 converts were immersed in the period 1881–1885. A considerable number of Baptists also moved in from Sweden at that time, and by 1885 the church membership reached 101.[14]

The spiritual life of the church and its missionary endeavor also received careful cultivation. A women's mission society was organized which throughout the years kept the missionary fire burning within the church. Moreover, Tjernlund followed in the footsteps of Lauritz

---

[13] *Fyrtio Ar,* op. cit., pp. 9–10.
[14] Ibid., p. 12.

Johanson in spreading the gospel to the neighboring towns. As a result of this intensive evangelizing, churches were organized in Providence, 1881, Worcester, 1880, and Campello 1883. Pastor Tjernlund also preached in Lowell and Cambridge where churches were formed later on.[15]

After an absence of three years, Tjernlund returned to Boston in 1888. Ceaseless activity and much progress characterized the following nine years. The membership more than doubled in seven years, increasing from 132 in 1888 to 268 in 1895. An organizational readjustment of the most important nature was also made in that period. Tremont Temple, the mother church, considered the time ripe for the Swedish mission to become an independent and self supporting church. That took place July 21, 1896, which date became the birthday of the Swedish Baptist church as an independent body.[16]

Another long pastorate of thirteen years began in 1897 when Alfred E. Lindberg succeeded Tjernlund as minister in the Boston church. Lindberg was a brilliant speaker and writer, a good organizer and known throughout the whole denomination for his exceptionally keen wit and humor. At that time the Swedish Baptists began to feel somewhat cramped in their old home, the Tremont Temple, where they had been housed practically all the time since 1873. The Tremont Temple no longer felt any particular responsibility for the Swedes, and were unwilling to continue to grant privileges as in former years. Hence it became necessary for the Swedish church to look for other quarters. In 1902 a building on Shawmut Avenue, which had formerly been used as an American church, was purchased, and remained the house of worship, as the Swedish Temple, until the early nineteen thirties, when the present beautiful structure was built. Two new Swedish Baptist churches were organized during Lindberg's charge in Boston, with members from the Boston church, namely at Norwood in 1902, and at Lynn in 1904.[17]

Of special interest and worth recording is a fact in the history of the Boston church during the ministry of J. O. Backlund. The new pastor was faced with the rather unpleasant duty of revising the church membership list. Many churches and pastors have been confronted with the same necessity but lacked courage to do anything about it. And yet, in order to keep a church relatively pure, and openly to protest against sin, it becomes the sad duty to exclude and drop members from church fellowship. In the year 1910 the membership in the Boston church was accordingly reduced from 358 to 280.[18] However, the apparent loss became a spiritual gain and prepared the church for more genuine progress in succeeding years.

---

[15] *Femito-Års Minnesbok,* op. cit., p. 10. *Fyrtio År,* op. cit., pp. 13–14.

[16] *Fyrtio År,* op. cit., p. 21.

[17] Ibid., pp. 32–33. See also *Nya Wecko-Posten,* March 5, 1890; May 20, 1891; Feb. 21, 1894, and Feb. 17, 1903.

Some twenty miles south of Boston is located the shoe manufacturing city of Brockton. In the early fifties Swedes began to move into Brockton which was then a small village. Among those immigrants a few were of the Baptist faith. In 1880 a Swedish Baptist church of five members was organized in North Easton, just outside of Brockton. After a short time these Baptists moved to Bridgewater, another suburb of Brockton, where they formed a church of eleven members in 1881. However, that church disbanded three or four years later because the members moved to Campello, which even then was really a part of Brockton. There the present Brockton church was organized of eleven charter members July 24, 1883. In North Easton as well as in Bridgewater and Campello it was the pioneer preacher, Alex Tjernlund of Boston, who was the moving spirit.[19] For several years he held regular services there, and many turned to the Lord under his preaching. He was also elected as the first pastor of the church, sharing his time with the Boston church.

In 1884, A. G. Holm, who had recently come from Sweden, assumed the leadership as the first full time pastor of the Brockton congregation. He was a good organizer and laid an enduring organizational foundation for coming years. The results took the form of a Sunday school, a society for young men and one for young women, an active choir, a board of deacons that ministered well to the needs of the church, and systematic missionary contributions. But undoubtedly the good pastor found it difficult to support his large family on the meagre salary of forty dollars a month, and after one year and seven months in Brockton he moved to another field. The church membership was then, in the spring of 1886, 48.[20]

During the first seven years pastors succeeded each other in rapid succession, staying only a year or two at the most. By 1890, however, it appears that the church had gained sufficient maturity to be able to retain the pastors for longer terms of service. Thus N. E. Nelson, N. N. Morten, who had taught in the Morgan Park Seminary several years, C. O. Dahlen, and G. W. Lindstrom, each held the charge in Brockton for approximately five years.[21]

---

[18] Ibid., p. 35.

[19] *Tjugofemårsberättelse,* Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Brockton, Mass., 1883–1908, p. 6. See also *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* 1883, p. 189.

[20] *Tjugofemårsberättelse,* op. cit., pp. 10–11.

During Dahlen's time, 1901–1906, a commodious house of worship was erected to replace the old meetinghouse of 1885. It was dedicated February 15, 1903. The increase in membership was not phenomenal but steady. From 105 in 1890 it rose to 176 at the close of 1907, 237 in 1920, 281 in 1930, and 443 in 1951. In the last decade, or more, marked progress has been made in the Brockton church.

In Quincy a Swedish Baptist church was organized of eight charter members June 5, 1885. J. P. Westerberg became the first pastor the following year and stayed until 1889, when the membership had reached 44. After a long pastorate of twelve years by P. A. Englund, 1889–1901, there followed several of short duration. By the twenty-fifth anniversary in 1910 the membership had increased to 117.[22] In 1922 when the church had 152 members, it merged with the local American Baptist church, and since that time it has maintained at least a token connection with the General Conference.

As early as 1882 Axel Tjernlund of Boston began to hold services in the homes of Swedish Baptists who had moved to Cambridge. In order to promote the work more effectively, a mission society named Ebenezer was organized in 1894. The following year twenty-one members of the Swedish Baptist church of Boston asked for their letters to form a church in Cambridge. This took place May 10, 1895. It was fortunate for this church to have as its pastor for the first two years the experienced pioneer preacher, Olof Lindh. When he moved to another field in 1897, the membership in the Cambridge church had increased to 54.[23] In 1899 C. E. Johnson, at that time missionary in New England, began twelve years of fruitful ministry in Cambridge. Many experienced conversion and were immersed in that period, and the membership reached 151 in 1911. A gradual decline then began to set in, reducing the membership to 59 in 1951. A faithful few, however, have kept the light burning throughout the years. In 1946 they sold their property in Cambridge and established themselves as the Evangel Baptist Church of Belmont, where they secured a building in a choice location and look forward with bright hopes.[24]

---

[21] Ibid., pp. 13–19. See also Ten Years History, *Nya Wecko-Posten,* August 16, 1893.

[22] *Tjugofemårs Berättelse,* Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Quincy, Mass., 1885–1910, pp. 1–3. See also *Nya Wecko-Posten,* June 2, 1905.

[23] *Historical Notes,* (MS), Swedish Baptist Church, Cambridge, Mass.

[24] *History* of the Swedish Baptist Conference of New England, M.S., 1899–1949, p. 14.

A small Sunday school which met in the home of Karl Peterson was the small beginning of Swedish Baptist work in Norwood. He had settled in the city in 1891. P. E. Engberg, the well known Sunday school missionary of the East, Axel Tjernlund of Boston, and several others preached at regular intervals in Norwood. But it was particularly the coming of C. E. Johnson that gave a great impetus to the work. Being missionary in New England in the late nineties, he made Norwood his home in 1897. The church experienced a thorough going revival that year so that within three months some sixty souls confessed faith in Christ.[25] From 1899 the Norwood Baptists constituted a mission of the Swedish Baptist church of Boston until December 20, 1902, when a church organized of 20 charter members. Two days before, a house of worship had been dedicated to divine service. In 1904 and in 1917 the church experienced a spiritual awakening, and several followed Christ in baptism. The membership in 1951 was 118.

Worcester, Mass.

Worcester is predominantly a Swedish city. Out of a population of 194,000 in 1940 at least 75,000 were of Swedish extraction. The first Swede arrived in 1868, and by 1883 the Swedish inhabitants of Worcester had increased to 7,000.[26] Lauritz Johanson of Boston was the first Swedish Baptist preacher, and probably the first one of any Swedish denomination to preach the gospel in Worcester, and A. W. Carlson was the first Swedish Baptist to locate in the city. In his home the believers gathered for spiritual edification in those early days. Nine of those immersed Christians united themselves into a Baptist church November 17, 1880. From that small and seemingly insignificant beginning the Worcester church, now known as the Belmont Street Church, has grown to be one of the largest Swedish Baptist churches in the eastern part of the country. Moreover, not less than five other churches have been organized out of the membership of the Worcester church, namely, Cleveland, Ohio, 1888; Waukegan, Illinois, 1892; Gardner, Massachusetts, 1895; Harlem Street, Worcester, 1896; and Bethel, Swedish Finnish, Worcester, 1900.[27]

The small group of nine Baptists did not put their light under a bushel. They continued to hold services in the various homes, and frequently Pastor Tjernlund of Boston assisted them in their soul winning efforts, with the result that the membership in a few months increased to 16. Throughout its whole history the Belmont Street Church has been blessed with exceptionally talented ministers. In the summer of 1881 P. A. Hjelm came from Falun, Sweden to become the first pastor of the church. With him there came eight others from his church in Sweden. Although Hjelm remained only a year and four months, the membership had reached 92 when he resigned. Later on he ministered to the church a second term, 1885–1888. The next pastor, warm-hearted Petrus Ostrom, also came directly from Sweden. During his three years of service, 1882–1885, the first meetinghouse was erected, which was replaced by the present beautiful sanctuary in 1912.[28] Ostrom saw the membership climb to 130 before he left. Under the ministry of the eloquent J. W. Hjerstrom, 1891–1895, who, like Hjelm came from Falun, Sweden, there was a great influx of members and an increase from 253 to 400. But at the end of 1896, there was a reduction to 266, due to the daughter churches that had been organized in that period. The largest baptism in the history of the Worcester church was in 1897 when thirty-three persons were immersed, and in that same year, during the brief ministry of the scholarly and philosophical Axel Tjernlund, not less than 75 new members were added to the congregation.

---

[25] *Historical Notes* (MS) Swedish Baptist Church at Norwood, Mass.

[26] *Kort Historik,* Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Worcester, Mass., 1880–1900, p. 3. See also *Fifty Years History* of First Swedish Baptist Church, Worcester, Mass., p. 1. See also *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* 1881, p. 222, 1882, p. 211; *Baneret,* Dec. 27, 1910; *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Dec. 6, 1910 and Dec. 22, 1915.

[27] *Fifty Years History,* op. cit., pp. 3, 10.

The Worcester church, like so many other churches located in the great Swedish centers of America, gained much by reason of a tremendously large immigration from Sweden in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. For example, in the first twenty years, 1880–1900, the church received an addition by baptism of 445 members, and in the same period almost as many, or 414, by transfer of letters.[29] In the frequent revivals that blessed the church, especially in the early years, the pastor was always his own evangelist, as was the case also in other churches. A number of full time Christian workers have also received spiritual training in the Belmont Street Church, and have gone out to serve the Master in both home and foreign missions. Probably the best known of them are August and Ruth Berg of India, and Doris Frykenberg, who with her husband, Eric Frykenberg, have spent several years as missionaries in South India.

The Harlem Street Baptist Church of Worcester was organized of 100 charter members, all from the Belmont Street Church, April 18, 1896. The mother church originally had been located in the area where the Harlem Street Church was formed, but later on it moved to the northern part of the city in the Belmont Hill area. Thus a need was created for another church in the southern section of the city.[30] A problem of discipline in the Belmont Street Church precipitated action in regard to the organization of a new congregation. It was a problem which has confronted all of the churches, namely the marriage of believers, and church members, with unbelievers. The Worcester church felt led to adopt stricter measures on that question than the average church had done; for it passed a resolution that no member might marry an outsider. The result was two parties in the church; a more lenient party, and a stricter one which claimed divine authority on its side. Finally the former party prevailed, and at the annual meeting voted out of office all the advocates of the stricter discipline. This brought matters to a head. Since many of these former officers lived in the southern section of the city, they began to agitate, contrary to the wish of the church, in favor of a new congregation.[31] One hundred strong! Numerically the Harlem Street Church had a good start.

---

[28] Ibid., pp. 5, 8.

[29] *Kort Historik,* op. cit., p. 18.

With a will to work, those energetic Baptists almost immediately began to erect a spacious sanctuary which was dedicated November 8, 1896. Like so many other churches, especially in the early years, the Harlem Street Church had frequent changes of pastors. G. W. Lindstrom was the first one and served one year, 1896–1897. The fifth in order was Axel Tjernlund, who under rather difficult circumstances ministered to the church for five years, 1903–1908. There were not less than eight pastors the first twenty-five years, the last one being K. J. Karlson, 1916–1922, who accepted a teaching position at Bethel Theological Seminary in 1922. By the time of the twenty-fifth year celebration in 1921 a membership of 236 was reported, and 204 in 1951.

In Worcester, there is a third Conference Baptist church which was organized of twenty charter members June 20, 1900.[32] Originally it was known as the First Swedish Finnish Baptist Church, and cooperated with the Swedish Finnish Mission Society of America. However, the church affiliated with the Swedish Baptist New England Conference in 1902, and a few years ago with the Baptist General Conference. Now it bears the name of Bethel Baptist Church. In 1951 it reported 83 members. The Swedish Finnish preacher Isak Roy went out from this church to become a successful pastor and home missionary. Erik Frykenberg, the beloved India missionary, also was a member of Worcester Bethel when he felt the call to full time service.

---

[30] *Historik,* Svenska Baptistförsamlingen å Harlem Street, 1896–1921, p. 5.

[31] Ibid., pp. 5–9. See also *Golden Jubilee History,* Harlem St. Baptist Church, 1896–1946, pp. 7–8.

[32] *Historik,* New England Konferensen 1901, p. 12 (MS). See also *Golden Anniversary History* of Swedish Baptist Conference of New England, 1899–1949, p. 17, (MS).

OTHER NEW ENGLAND CHURCHES

Providence was founded by Roger Williams, the first Baptist preacher in America, when in 1636 he was banished, because of his faith, from the colony of Massachusetts. Three years later, in 1639, Williams organized the first Baptist church in America. That church experienced difficulties and divisions in its early history. In like manner, too, the Swedish Baptist church of Providence has had its share of trials, partly because of internal dissension among the members in its early years, and partly because the members have always been widely dispersed in the city.

It was in the fall of 1873 that K. A. Ostergren, then a student at Newton Center Theological Institution, began to visit Providence and preach the gospel in response to an invitation from some Swedish Baptists who had located there. Two years later Lauritz Johanson of Boston continued the work with two regular preaching services a month. A revival produced several converts, and ten believers were immersed in Ten Miles River. When Tjernlund came to Boston in 1880, he, too, devoted much time and interest to the Providence field. The following year, in the fall of 1881, a church was formed of nine persons.[33] In 1883 J. P. Westerberg was called from Sweden to become its first pastor. After ten months the church numbered 41 members. Seventh Day Adventism, however, began to prey upon the small group of Baptists in Providence, as it had done in so many other Swedish Baptist churches. The good pastor resigned after ten months of service, and the church languished and declined until by a formal vote it was dissolved October 17, 1885.

But eight days later, October 25, 1885, a new church was organized, this time also of nine members.[34] John Olander, recently arrived from Sweden, took charge as pastor of the little church. He remained until the following spring when the membership had reached 30. In rapid succession three other ministers took up the work in the Providence church, which by 1889 again was approaching a state of dissolution. Only twenty members remained then. As formerly, it was Adventism, and no doubt poor leadership, which caused the falling away of the saints.

---

[33] *Kort Historik,* Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Providence, R. I., 1885–1910, p. 5. See also *Historik,* New England Konferensen, 1901, op. cit., p. 7.

[34] This year, 1885, was considered the date of organization by the church until it was changed to 1881 in the 1938–1939 Annual of the General Conference.

The coming of Fred Palmborg, direct from Sweden in 1889, to assume the leadership of the few discouraged Baptists ushered in a new era for the Providence church. Sympathetic and kind as he was, he suceeded in gathering up the fragments and in making new converts. The membership was brought up to 119 when he left after a ministry of four years.[35] Great victories and more tribulation were reported in the next two years with a consequent reduction in membership. However, in those years the first house of worship of the Providence church was erected and dedicated April 14, 1895. A longer pastorate of eight years, 1895–1903, under the wise leadership of J. P. Forsell, brought order and stability to the Swedish Baptist work in Providence, which younger pastors and leaders have continued with much blessing and favor of God.[36] In 1908 the present church building was purchased. The membership in 1951 was 96.

In 1883 a few Swedish Baptists from Worcester moved to Gardner. The following year Petrus Ostrom, then pastor in Worcester, began regular preaching services at Gardner. He was the first Swedish Baptist minister to visit the city. However, several years passed before that small beginning of gospel services took an organized form. In 1892 "Farbror" (Uncle) Engberg started a Sunday school. A chapel was also erected that same year.[37] Three years later, October 18, 1895, The Pine Street (Swedish Baptist) church was formed with twenty-six charter members.[38] At the twenty-fifth anniversary the membership

Another church, named Calvary, and composed mostly of Swedish Finnish people, was organized in Gardner September 17, 1908, of 38 charter members. The work had its inception in 1901 when the pastor of the Pine Street Church began to hold services in that part of the city. Members of the Bethel Church of Worcester cooperated, and within a few years a Ladies' Aid Society, a Sunday school, and a Young People's Society had been organized.[39] It is a significant fact that the Calvary Church of Gardner, although comparatively small in membership, has sent out into the active ministry not less than four men: Isak Berg, John Hugo, Emil Nylund, and William Knight.

---

[35] *Kort Historik,* op. cit., pp. 8–10.

[36] Ibid., pp. 11–16. See also *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Nov. 29, 1910. *Baneret,* Dec. 6, 1910.

[37] *Anniversary History* of New England Conference, op. cit., p. 14.

[38] *Thirty-five Years History* (MS), Gardner Swedish Baptist Church.

was 39, and in 1951 it had increased to 101.

[39] *Anniversary History* of New England Conference, op. cit., pp. 14–15.

In New Bedford, Massachusetts, a Swedish Baptist church was organized in the year 1900, with 31 charter members. The membership had reached 139 in 1951. In the early eighties Swedish Baptist work was begun at Springfield. However, not until 1904 did that work assume an organized form. A mission was started that year, and a church was constituted October 26, 1905.[40] It reached a membership of 53 in 1949. At Manchester, New Hampshire, a Swedish Baptist church was organized in 1889.[41] In the early years this church experienced considerable progress. In 1950 a reorganization took place resulting in a new church.

MID-ATLANTIC CONFERENCE

A chronological survey of the churches in the eastern area might be due here. As seen previously (Ch. Seven), the first Swedish Baptist church organized in the East was the Trinity Church (First Swedish Baptist) of New York City, which was formed in 1867. In the following decade, in the seventies, two new churches, both in New England, came into existence, namely New Sweden, 1871, and Boston, 1875. As was the case in the whole denomination, the eighth decade manifested great activity and much growth among Swedish Baptists in the east. Not less than seventeen new churches were formed in this period, all of which, with one exception, have survived to the present and are still active in the Conference. The great immigration from Sweden, which reached its peak in the eighties, undoubtedly is an important creative factor in the wholesome expansion of churches at that time. The sixteen surviving churches are as follows: Worcester, Massachusetts, Belmont Street, organized 1880; Bridgeport, Connecticut, 1882; New Haven and New Britain, Connecticut, and Brockton, Massachusetts, 1883; Brooklyn and Jamestown, New York, and McKeesport, Pennsylvania, 1884; Providence, Rhode Island, reorganized 1885; Meriden, Connecticut, 1887; Bristol and Hartford, Connecticut, 1888; Manchester, New Hampshire, Quincy, Massachusetts, Cleveland, Ohio, and Wilmington, Delaware, 1889. In the nineties there were eighteen churches organized in the eastern states, but only seven are at present in existence as members of the Conference. They are Youngstown, Ohio, and Warren, Pennsylvania, 1890; Waterbury, Connecticut, 1892; Cambridge and Gardner, Massachusetts, and Montclair, New Jersey, 1895; and Harlem Street, Worcester, Massachusetts, 1896.[42]

---

[40] Ibid., p. 16.

[41] Ibid., p. 15.

[42] Lecture by A. P. Ekman, *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Oct. 16, 1901, pp. 1–2.

Bridgeport, Connecticut

It was exactly fifteen years after the organization of the Swedish Baptist church in New York City that the next church in the Mid-Atlantic Conference, at Bridgeport, was formed. A few Baptists had arrived from Sweden, and some of the same faith and nationality from other eastern points had located at Bridgeport. True to form, these believers soon discovered each other and sought spiritual fellowship. In this they were led by a twenty year old youth from New Haven by the name of O. P. Peterson, who conducted preaching services in Bridgeport every Friday evening, paying his own traveling expenses.[43] His work at Bridgeport received divine approval, and new believers were added to the little group. The pioneer preacher Olof Lindh, who at that time was pastor in New York and who became instrumental in organizing more Swedish Baptist churches in the eastern area than any other man, also visited Bridgeport and encouraged the immersed believers to organize a church. Under his leadership that important step was taken June 15, 1882.[44]

To begin with, local talents within the church were used in conducting the services, with some help from O. P. Peterson. After two years this small group, limited though they were in financial resources, erected a splendid house of worship.[45] The first pastor, J. P. Westerberg, remained only one year. His successors, twelve in all, including the present incumbent, stayed longer, and all of them led the church forward to victory. The Lord blessed the Bridgeport church with frequent revivals. The first one came in 1890 when Betsy Anderson became the visible instrument in leading many lost souls to a conversion experience. Several were added to the church. The year 1894 became an even greater harvest time when not less than forty believers joined the congregation.

Times of testing, however, also were experienced by the Bridgeport believers. The years 1897–1898 undoubtedly became the darkest period in the whole history of the church. Bitter contentions and an unforgiving spirit on the part of many nearly devastated the flock. Not less than fifty were excluded from the church membership. But the small group of believers was kept from complete destruction. After the trials it pleased God to send a gracious revival, and sixty new members were added to the church which grew spiritually stronger and wiser because of the testing.[46]

---

[43] *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* 1882, p. 163.

[44] *Femtioårsberättelse,* Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Bridgeport, Conn., 1882–1932, p. 7.

[45] 30-Årsberättelse, *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Nov. 11, 1902.

In the field of Sunday school work the Bridgeport church has been unusually active, especially in its early years. The first Sunday school was organized in 1888, the second one in another part of the city in 1900, followed by a third two years later. A fourth one did a splendid work in still another area of the city. Undoubtedly many a boy and girl found their way to Christ through those Sunday schools.

A mountain top of achievement was reached in 1919. That year the Bridgeport church erected a new sanctuary to replace the old meetinghouse which had served since 1884. The new temple is a beautiful structure, surpassed by few, if any, in the entire General Conference. A heroic undertaking it was, indeed, on the part of a comparatively small congregation of not quite two hundred members to assume an expenditure of $85,000.00 But with a spirit of sacrifice, and with a wise and practical minded church builder like Pastor Oliver Laurence as leader, the task was successfully accomplished. With a membership of 359 in 1951, the Bridgeport church is at present the strongest in the Mid-Atlantic (New York) Conference. More than is commonly the case, this church has been blessed throughout the years with several lay leaders of ability and devotion to the Master's cause, some of whom have been generously active in many phases of General Conference work.

OTHER CHURCHES IN CONNECTICUT

Klas Osterholm from Brooklyn was the first Swedish Baptist preacher to proclaim the gospel in New Britain. That was on Good Friday, 1882. The year before, three Swedes had joined the American Baptist church of the city, and in October of 1883 Olof Lindh immersed eight believers, who, together with seven others that had letters of transfer, also united with the American Baptist church. On December 31, 1883, these eighteen Swedish Baptists formed a church of their own.[47] Torsten Clafford, who for a few months had served as missionary of the recently organized Swedish Baptist Conference of the Eastern States, became the first pastor of the New Britain church. As is well known to all Swedish Baptists, New Britain is the place where the Klingberg Children's Home is located, and its beloved founder also ministered to the church for nearly thirty years, 1900–1924; 1935–1940. A church building was erected in 1893.

---

[46] *Femtioårsberättelse,* op. cit., pp. 10–11.

[47] *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Jan. 17, 1894. A copy of the church records gives the date of organization as of Jan. 1, 1884.

The initiative to Swedish Baptist work in New Haven was taken by two members of the Conference Baptist church in New York City, who had moved to New Haven. O. P. Peterson, one of their fellow members in the New York church, who at that time lived in Bridgeport, was invited to conduct a preaching service in New Haven. The young man, then in his early twenties, responded to the invitation one Sunday in February, 1882. A large crowd of Swedes turned out, and the speaker himself said in later years, "It was one of the most blessed services I ever attended."[48] O. P. Peterson moved to New Haven where his preaching to the Swedes attracted considerable attention. The Lord honored his Word to the salvation of several souls, and O. Lindh came from New York to immerse some of the believers. Eleven of these organized a Swedish Baptist church October 8, 1882. The following summer O. P. Peterson, who had begun his training for the ministry in Edgren's Seminary, served the New Haven church with the result that the membership was doubled in the first year.[49]

However, an intense struggle for existence, more than in the average church, marks the entire history of the Swedish Baptist church of New Haven. At the end of the first ten years it was seriously considered to dissolve the organization. A typical discouraging experience is recorded for the period 1889–1891. In those two years 26 new members were added to the church, but 38 members left, the majority of these moving to other places. From a high of 119 in 1905 the membership reached a low of only 6 in 1948. The last report from the New Haven church is found in the 1949–1950 Conference Annual.

In August of 1884, T. Clafford, pastor of the recently organized Swedish Baptist church of New Britain, began to make weekly preaching visits to Meriden. At that time there was only one Swedish Baptist in the city. However, the Spirit of God manifested His convicting power in those gospel services, and several turned in repentance and faith to the Lord. Some of the converts were immersed by Pastor Clafford in New Britain. On February 16, 1887, nineteen of the believers formed a Swedish Baptist church in Meriden, being the first Swedish congregation of any denomination in that city. As in so many other cases in the eastern area, Olof Lindh was present and led the proceedings. For a few months the New Britain pastor shared his time with the new church in Meriden. In August of 1888 A. P. Swärd, the first regular pastor, arrived to minister to the congregation, whose membership by that time had increased to 56. Swärd was a man of order and laid a good and strong organizational foundation for future years.[50] Experiencing a healthy spiritual development and outward growth, the church reached a membership of 133 in 1906, and 182 in 1951. In the early years, as in so many other churches, the pioneer missionary spirit ran high in the Meriden church. For it was hardly organized as a congregation before it started gospel work in Hartford and later in Waterbury and Bristol.

---

[48] *Kort Historik,* Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, New Haven, Conn., 1882–1907, p. 3. See also *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* 1882, p. 247.

[49] *Historik,* op. cit., p. 6. See also *Svea,* Feb. 18, 1931.

As far back as 1860 there was a young girl, later known as Mrs. L. F. Anderson of Osceola, Nebraska, who was the first Swedish Baptist to reside in Hartford. She had come from Örebro, Sweden. It was not until more than twenty years later, however, that the first Swedish Baptist preacher appeared in Hartford. It was T. Clafford, the pastor at New Britain, who broke ground in Hartford commencing regular preaching services in the spring of 1883. Others continued the good work, and several accepted Christ as Savior and were baptized. On October 27, 1888, a Swedish Baptist church was organized, composed of ten charter members.[51]

In the year 1900 when the congregation had reached a membership of 76, a beautiful sanctuary was erected. The church prospered in numerical growth and spiritual strength. Seeds of dissension, however, were sown by an unwise leader, and in 1931 between fifty and sixty members, or about one-third of the entire membership, left to organize a Pentecostal church. But the remaining faithful few refused to give up, and to the present they have kept the gospel light shining in Hartford.

Pastor Rohnstrom of Meriden was most likely the first Swedish Baptist preacher to hold services in Waterbury. That was in the early eighteen-nineties. At that time several Swedes of the Baptist faith had located in the city. On April 8, 1892, eight immersed believers formed the Swedish Baptist church of Waterbury.[52] Never large in membership, at no time reaching the one hundred mark, the few faithful believers in this church have continued to labor for Christ in the community. The beautiful and commodious sanctuary, erected in

[50] *Historik,* Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Meriden, Conn., 1887–1907, pp. 3–6. See also *Nya Wecko-Posten,* March 10, 1897.

[51] *Fiftieth Anniversary,* Swedish Bethel Church, Hartford, Conn., 1888–1938.

[52] *Minnesskrift,* Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Waterbury, Conn., 1892–1917, pp. 11–12.

1907–1908, is an honor to God and a credit to a small group of believers hardly sixty in number.

CHURCHES IN NEW YORK

The story of the First Swedish Baptist Church (Trinity) of New York City, organized in 1867, has been told in Chapter Seven. Inasmuch as several of the members, after a few years, moved to Brooklyn, whose Swedish population had increased quite rapidly, it seemed only natural to try to get a foothold for the spread of the gospel there also. When Olof Lindh, in 1881, became pastor of the New York church, great advance was made in the home church but particularly in the Brooklyn field. A Sunday school and a ladies' missionary society were organized, and regular preaching services resulted in many conversions.[53] On December 21, 1883, not less than ninety-three members of the New York church banded themselves together and formed the First Swedish Baptist Church of Brooklyn.[54] Such a large group of charter members constituted a more auspicious beginning than most churches ever had. E. Lundin, who at that time was preaching in New Haven, Connecticut, was called as pastor and assumed the leadership of the Brooklyn church in the early part of January. The work prospered in a remarkable way. Eighty-six new members were added during the first year, a large proportion of these coming by way of immigration from Sweden.[55]

However, smooth sailing did not continue. Opposition to some doctrinal views of Petrus Ostrom, who had succeeded Lundin as pastor, led to a secession, in 1888, of some one hundred members, more than a third of the entire membership. The seceding group formed a new congregation, but most of its members after a few years, returned to the mother church.[56]

A thoroughgoing revival followed by a great ingathering of souls visited the church in the early nineties. A former Lutheran minister by the name of Olof Hedeen, who had been led to become a Baptist, through a careful study of the New Testament, was called in the fall of 1890 to become pastor of the Brooklyn church. Brilliant and warm-hearted young Hedeen — he was thirty at that time — saw scores turn to Christ and added to the church. One of the young converts of those early years was Arvid Gordh, who later distinguished himself in an extraordinary way among Swedish Baptists. By 1896, when Hedeen left to assume a professorship in the Swedish Baptist Theological Seminary, the membership had increased from 180 in 1890 to 467, making the Brooklyn church one of the largest in the entire General Conference.[57] In 1893 the old church building was replaced by the present spacious sanctuary.

---

[53] *Tjugofem-Års Minne,* 1883–1908, Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Brooklyn, N. Y., p. 11.

[54] Ibid., p. 13. O. Lindh in his *Minnen,* p. 159, states that the church was formed in December, 1883, and recognized by a council in Central Baptist Church January 14, 1884. The author of the 50th Anniversary history of the church however, states that there is nothing in the church records to prove that it was organized Dec. 21, 1883. But no other date is given, only the date for recognition, Jan. 15, 1884. In the absence of any date in the church records, it appears that Lindh's statement, together with that of the 25 years history, might be conclusive.

[55] *Tjugofem-Års Minne,* op. cit., p. 14. See also Historik över Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingens i Brooklyn 45-åriga verksamhet (MS), p. 2. *Nya Wecko-Posten,* March 22, 1904.

[56] *Historik,* op. cit., p. 3.

With the coming of O. J. Engstrand in 1896 there began a long pastorate of twenty-eight years. Being an eloquent and powerful speaker and a good organizer, Engstrand succeeded in maintaining a normal development of the Brooklyn church. Two daughter churches were also organized in that period — Ebenezer in 1897, and Bay Ridge in 1910. Both of these churches later left the General Conference fellowship. Younger ministers continued to build successfully on the old foundation and to lead the Brooklyn church to victory.

The Conference church at Schenectady had its origin in a Swedish Baptist mission which was organized in 1909 of 13 persons, who had their membership in the Emmanuel Baptist Church of that city. On September 7, 1911 30 members of the Swedish mission formed an independent Swedish Baptist church.[58]

Oscar W. Johnson, who from the beginning of the mission had served as pastor, continued in that capacity for a few years. In 1951 the church had reached a membership of 61.

CHURCHES IN NEW JERSEY AND DELAWARE

In New Jersey there are at present two churches of the General Conference fellowship, namely at Montclair and West Orange. Like a few other Swedish Baptist churches in the eastern area, the Montclair church was started as a Swedish branch of the local American Baptist church. The organization took place February 7, 1895, with ten members. Carl Hedeen became the first pastor.[59] After some time the Swedish group became independent of the American church, and throughout the years steady progress has been experienced. In the early nineties Swedish Baptists began to hold services in Newark. These were kept up more or less regularly for about a decade. Finally the time seemed ripe for organization, which took place December 11, 1901, with not less than thirty-five charter members, the majority coming from Arlington.[60] Axel Kumlin, a warm-hearted evangelist, became the first pastor. Mainly because of a shifting population, the church relocated in West Orange where, at the present time, a promising work is being carried on.

---

[57] *Historik,* Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Brooklyn, N. Y., 50-*Åriga Verksamhet,* (MS), 1884–1934, p. 8.

[58] Original Minutes, Swedish Baptist Church, Schenectady, N. Y.

[59] Records of Montclair Swedish Baptist Church.

It is encouraging that the Swedish Baptists have at least one church in Delaware where the Swedes started a colony in 1638. As early as 1873 there was a small group of Swedes who met for gospel services in the Delaware Avenue Baptist Church of Wilmington. Later on the meetings were held mostly in various homes. In 1883 a Sunday school was organized. Olof Lindh, at that time general missionary of the Mid-Atlantic Conference, visited Wilmington on January 4, 1889, and continued to proclaim the gospel there for several days. As a result, some believed and were baptized. Twelve of the immersed believers formed a Baptist church January 12, 1889. As a result of hard work and prayer on the part of those few Baptists, the membership had more than doubled at the end of the first year.[61] E. Sibiakoffsky became the first regular pastor, starting his one year ministry in the spring of 1891.[62] The longest pastorate was that of Martin Larson, who served the church ably between 1929 and 1941. The year 1938 became a record year in the history of the Wilmington church, for in that year, June 22–26, the church entertained the Swedish Baptist General Conference of America. Since the Tercentenary of the landing of the Swedes in Delaware was celebrated the same month, that conference was attended by an unusually large number of delegates and visitors from all sections of the country and also from abroad. Approximately eight hundred attended. This was the first time in the history of the General Conference that a church then composed of not more than about 125 members had served as host to an annual conference. A credit, indeed, it was to the believers in Wilmington, and many lasting blessings were received throughout the community.[63]

---

[60] *25-Års Berättelse,* Svenska Baptistförsamlingen i Newark, N. J., 1901–1926, pp. 1–3.

[61] *Fifty Years History,* First Swedish Baptist Church, Wilmington, Delaware, 1889–1939, pp. 9–10.

[62] *Nya Wecko-Posten,* March 12, 1890, p. 4.

[63] *Fifty Years History,* op. cit., p. 21.

CHURCHES IN THE MIDDLE EAST CONFERENCE

In this conference there are nine churches with a combined membership of about one thousand. Here as elsewhere several smaller churches ceased to exist or affiliated with American Baptist State Conventions after a few years. A fundamental reason, no doubt, for the limited success is to be found in the fact that, except in Jamestown, New York, the Swedes never became very numerous in this area. The conference includes southwestern New York, Western Pennsylvania and northern Ohio.

Jamestown, New York

The beginning of Swedish Baptist work in this section of the country was made in Jamestown, New York. Early in the history of that city the Swedes were attracted in great number, constituting about one half of the population in 1914, and paying about 65 per cent of all the taxes. Most of the industries were owned and operated by them, and Swedes had at several times served as mayor of the city.[64] Olof Lindh, ever alert for new opportunities to proclaim the gospel to his countrymen and to organize Swedish Baptist churches, had heard about the large Swedish population of Jamestown, and also that a few Baptists had located there. The pioneer preacher did not hesitate. In the month of July, 1884 he left his church in New York City and set out for Jamestown. After preaching there for three days he organized a church, composed of thirteen members, July 20, 1884.[65] Lindh himself, usually very optimistic, seemed rather dubious and discouraged in regard to the situation at Jamestown, as he wrote in his Minnen:

> Never before have I organized a church composed of such strange characters, and never did I deliver such a fatherly admonition to a new group as I did to these friends. The competition was keen: a large and strong Lutheran church of about 2,000 members, including children; a good sized Mission Covenant church, and a rather active Methodist church. All these had talented pastors and good church buildings. But what did we have? We were only twelve poor Baptists, considered very dangerous heretics, and had no meetinghouse and no pastor.[66]

However, that small group of despised Baptists had a will to live, and by God's grace they pressed forward. A year after the organization a house of worship was erected, and the missionary minded pastor,

---

[64] *Minnesskrift,* Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Jamestown, New York, 1884–1914, p. 17.

[65] Ibid., p. 18. See *Minnen,* op. cit., p. 174, and *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* 1884, p. 266.

[66] *Minnen,* p. 174.

Axel Wester, not satisfied to limit his activities to Jamestown, made regular preaching trips to Warren, McKeesport, and a number of other places. When he resigned in 1890 to move to another field, the Jamestown church had a membership of 91. But the days of trial were not over. A. P. Hanson, who served as pastor from 1903 to 1908, reported the following at the thirtieth anniversary of the church in 1914:

> The situation was critical. The members were few and poor, the debt was heavy, the church building was old and unattractive, even unsafe. The roof was leaky, and the floor was rotten. Outsiders could not easily be persuaded to attend services in such a place. And there were hardly any young people in the church. In no field where I have labored in the gospel service during the last thirty years has the work been as difficult as in Jamestown. But the results also have been greater than in any other case in my experience.[67]

The old and inadequate church building was replaced by a new and beautiful house of worship dedicated to divine worship June 30, 1907. The next few years, 1908–1913, when C. A. Aldeen ministered to the church, proved the most fruitful period in her entire history. The membership increased from 117 to 231.

McKeesport, Pennsylvania

McKeesport, located a few miles south of Pittsburgh, had in the early eighties a population of about 12,000, including some 900 Swedes.[68] A small "Free Church" was organized in 1882, which included in its membership a few Baptists. However, the standing of a church which was divided on the method of baptism was questioned. This led to a desire for the founding of a Baptist church. The organization took place under the leadership of Olof Lindh September 6, 1884, with seventeen charter members. The following day four members were added through immersion.[69] Of this church Olof Lindh had greater hope and expectation than of any other he had organized. He was sure that they would remain on the solid rock upon which they had been planted; for they were experienced brethren with much interest in God's work.[70]

However, the path was not an easy one. The first twelve years in the history of the McKeesport church was a period of struggle and trials. Frequent pastoral changes, sometimes every year, did not help to improve matters. Two of the early pastors had to be excluded from the church because of unchristian conduct. The same was true of many members. But, with the coming of E. J. Nordlander in 1905, a brighter day dawned. He was an indefatigable worker, a convincing preacher, and a good pastor. His charge continued for eight and a half years, the longest in the entire history of the church. A beautiful and spacious house of worship was erected, and the membership reached a high of 248.[71] Since that time McKeesport church has experienced a healthy development.

---

[67] *Minnesskrift,* Jamestown, op. cit., pp. 27–28.

[68] *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* 1884, p. 327.

[69] *Historik,* Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, McKeesport, Pa., 1884–1909; pp. 5–8. See also *Golden Jubilee History,* McKeesport, 1884–1934, pp. 3–7.

[70] *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* 1884, p. 327.

OTHER CHURCHES IN THE MIDDLE EAST AREA

The first Swedish Baptists to settle in Cleveland came from Ishpeming, Michigan in 1883. In 1889 several others of the same faith arrived from Worcester, Massachusetts. On the 28th of July, 1889, seventeen immersed believers formed a Swedish Baptist church in Cleveland and Wilhelm Kohler became their first pastor. It has been said that John D. Rockefeller, Sr. paid for the first meetinghouse, which was built in 1894, and that one of his daughters defrayed the cost of the pews.[72] In 1913 a more up-to-date church building was erected. During the first forty years not less than sixteen different pastors ministered to the needs of the Cleveland church. In the last few years considerable progress has been made.

The Swedish Baptist church in Youngstown, Ohio, now known as the Evangel Baptist Church, had a smaller beginning than the average church. It was organized with five charter members November 16, 1890.[73] During the first seven years of its existence the church was without the service of a regular salaried minister. The ministry of S. J. Peterson became outstanding in several respects, and during his first period of service, 1904–1911, the soul winning activities resulted in the addition of 162 new members. In his second period as pastor of the Youngstown church, 133 were welcomed into the fellowship. Under the leadership of later pastors the membership has increased to 194 in 1951.

Axel Wester, pastor of the Swedish Baptist Church of Jamestown, New York, was the first Swedish Baptist to preach the gospel in Warren, Pennsylvania. That was in November, 1885.[74] After a few years of preparatory work the time seemed ripe for the organization of a church, which took place December 23, 1890, under the leadership of Olof Lindh. Although the Warren church never has attained a large membership, it has made an unusual contribution to world-wide missions both at home and abroad. For within a comparatively short period three messengers of the cross were sent out by this church as foreign missionaries, namely, John Selander and Bengt Anderson of Assam, and Signe Erickson of the Philippine Islands, the latter of whom was martyred by the Japanese in 1942. Moreover, three younger pastors on the home field, Marvin Samuelson and his brother Grant, and Carl Holmberg, also found life in Christ under the ministry of the Warren church.

---

[71] *Golden Jubilee History,* p. 15.

[72] Notes by Eric Berg.

[73] *Golden Jubilee History,* Evangel Baptist Church, Youngstown, O., 1890–1940, p. 4. See also *Tjugofem-Års Historik* (MS).

Other churches in the Middle East are: Lanse, Pennsylvania, organized 1891; Erie, Pennsylvania, formed in 1895; and Akron, Ohio, in 1919.

---

[74] *Kort Historik,* Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Warren, Pa., 1890–1915 (MS).

CHAPTER NINETEEN

CHURCHES IN THE CENTRAL STATES

Although some Swedish colonies were planted in Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, and South Dakota, as early as in the eighteen-fifties and sixties, the Swedes in those states never became as numerous as in Minnesota. That is true of the Swedish Baptists as well. However, these states, too, have seen the genesis and growth of a number of strong and active churches.

SWEDISH BAPTISTS IN IOWA

Within this conference there existed in 1951 fourteen churches with a combined membership of 2,230. Since four of these churches, namely, Village Creek (Lansing), Stratford, Kiron and Forest City were organized before 1870, their story has been told in earlier chapters (See Chs. Four, Five, Six, Eight). A brief account of the origin and growth of the other churches in Iowa will be attempted here.

Sioux City

The first Swedes to settle in Sioux City were N. O. Stenbeck and his wife and four children, who arrived there in 1867, twelve years after the town had been platted.[1] An unusually rapid increase in the Swedish population was evidently experienced, for it was reported that by 1870 S. P. A. Lundahl, the first Swedish minister in the city, preached to a Scandinavian congregation of about three hundred. However, as Sioux City served as the gateway to the great prairies of Nebraska and the Dakota Territory, it is likely that many of the newcomers failed to build permanent homes in the city but proceeded farther west in order to satisfy their ever present land hunger.[2]

An interdenominational mission society had been organized as early as 1872, with M. Dahlberg as leader. After some time a few of that group adopted Baptist views, and on January 17, 1874, eight immersed believers constituted a Swedish Baptist church. Dahlberg served as the first lay preacher.[3] Every member in the small group came from the same place in Sweden, Gagnef, in the province of Dalarne. There, according to Lapp Lisa, the people are very stubborn and somewhat exclusive, and that may be the reason for the slow progress in early years. Then, also, they were too few and too poor to support a minister who could give all his time to the work. However, with the aid of faithful lay preachers the gospel light was kept burning, and some were saved and added to the church. When J. M. Shulene in 1883 assumed the duties as the first regular pastor there were about twelve members.[4]

---

[1] Ahlstrom, *Swedish Baptist Work in Iowa,* p. 185.

[2] Ibid., p. 185.

An interesting incident is recorded as having taken place in March, 1877, when the church was gathered to choose a leader or someone who could speak at the meetings and serve as pastor for the group. Two names were on the list for election: A. Mattson and L. Norelius, both members of the church, and it was proposed to cast lots to determine who should be elected. A lively discussion ensued as to whether that would be right. It was finally decided that it would be, having occurred at least once in the apostolic church, Acts 1:15-26. But some suggested that they should have a third ballot also, and on that they would have the name of God. This idea was accepted, and when the ballot was drawn it was found to be the one containing God's name. All of those present were sure it was God's leading, and He, of course, should be the Head of the church. No doubt this is the only church in our denomination that by election has chosen God for her pastor.[5]

When L. J. Ahlstrom in 1886 accepted the Sioux City church as his charge, the membership had reached 24. A heavy indebtedness rested on the property, but those few heroes of faith went to work with a determination to succeed. The debt was paid, and the membership increased. This church has the distinction of being the first among Swedish Baptist churches to have a church paper. It was called "The Harbinger of Peace," and was published by the pastor, the first number being issued in December, 1887.

In the long line of under shepherds who have led the Sioux City church to victory throughout the years, C. J. Almquist deserves special mention. He became pastor of the church in 1901 and served four years. Being peculiarly gifted in the matter of raising money, a talent which he often used in larger denominational projects, he set about to lead his people in Sioux City into a grand building program. A beautiful sanctuary at the cost of more than twelve thousand dollars was dedicated in October, 1904,[6] and shortly afterwards a parsonage was built for $2,500. At that time the church membership was only 113. In recent years the Sioux City church has been signally blessed by the Lord. Not less than sixty-two new members were added in 1951, and the Sunday school doubled its attendance in two years.

---

[3] *Golden Jubilee History,* The Swedish Baptist Church, Sioux City, Ia., 1874–1924, p. 7. See also *75th Anniversary History,* Central Baptist Church, Sioux City, Ia., 1874–1949, p. 6.

[4] *Golden Jubilee History,* op. cit., p. 12.

[5] *Golden Jubilee History,* op. cit., p. 11.

Des Moines

New Sweden of Iowa, located 42 miles west of Burlington, was, next to the Pine Lake settlement of Wisconsin, the oldest settlement of Swedes in America, excepting, of course, the Delaware colony of 1638. The first Swedish immigrants arrived at New Sweden in 1845.[7] They were all from the province of Östergötland, Sweden, and had one Peter Cassel as their leader. The following year another group of Swedes from the same province located at a place 25 miles north of Des Moines, a place which later became known as Swede Point. There on the American frontier their land hunger was satisfied, and, what is even more precious than houses and land, they found freedom to worship God without being persecuted. As early as 1853 Gustaf Palmquist held gospel services among the settlers at Swede Point.[8]

By 1868 a considerable number of Swedes had immigrated and settled in Des Moines. Olof Lindh, at that time itinerant preacher in Illinois, became the first Swedish Baptist to proclaim the gospel to that group of immigrants. He arrived in Des Moines the first part of January 1869, and with much privation and hardship labored there for two weeks. The primitive homes in which the meetings were held were crowded to capacity, and a considerable number of people were turned away. The Spirit of God worked powerfully toward the salvation of many souls, and the mood of the services was one of irrepressible praise. One woman, who was willing to follow her Lord in baptism, became the firstfruit of Swedish Baptist work in Des Moines.[9] Ten years later, in the summer of 1879, several Baptist families arrived from Sweden. Among these was a shoemaker by the name of Peter Peterson, who started a Sunday school in his home and throughout his long life became an unusually successful and consecrated leader in the Swedish Baptist church of Des Moines. Influenced by C. Silene, at

[6] Ahlstrom, op. cit., p. 200.

[7] Norelius, op. cit., 87. Skarstedt, *Svensk-Amerikanska Folket,* p. 35.

[8] *Historical Sketch,* Penn Avenue Baptist Church, Des Moines, Ia. 1881–1931. p. 11.

[9] Ibid., pp. 12–16.

that time missionary of the General Conference, and C. A. Sandvall, pastor at Swede Bend (Stratford, Iowa), twelve immersed believers constituted themselves a Swedish Baptist church on December 18, 1881, with Peter Peterson as leader and lay preacher.[10]

> A point of procedure was raised upon a proposal that the seven members from the American church, having a certain status of authority by the regularity of their previous membership and transfer, should first form the union, after which others who would wish to unite in membership with the church might unite upon confession. After an exchange of views the knot was cut by a common consent to a simple procedure. Each baptized believer told his comrades the story of his conversion, his belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, and of his relationship and fellowship with his comrades. Following this the twelve Christians joined in a circle taking each other by the hand, and Pastor Sandvall in the center led in a prayer, invoking God's continued blessings upon the new formed church.[11]

As in so many other early churches, a spirit of revival prevailed from the very beginning. Conversions of that time were characterized by intense mental and spiritual struggles, partly for the reason that conversion among the pioneers demanded so thoroughgoing a change in the life of the convert. The years of 1886, 1895, and 1924 were marked by stirring revivals, when many were added to the church membership.[12]

The Des Moines church was fortunate in having a lay preacher like Peter Peterson, who was talented and consecrated and full of compassion for the lost. He served as pastor the first two years. At a certain prayer meeting L. W. Linder, who served the church as minister 1892–1896, suggested: "Those of you who believe in prayer, will you meet with me some additional evening each week to pray that we may have a revival this coming winter." But Peter Peterson arose and said, "I mean always to be in accord with what the pastor says, but tonight I am opposed to him. Let us pray that the revival will begin right now."[13] That prayer meeting went to its knees with the result that two young men surrendered their lives to Christ that very night. An outpouring of God's Spirit continued throughout the winter. At the Golden Jubilee of the church one of the speakers gave the following beautiful tribute to the pioneer leader:

---

[10] Ibid., pp. 19–20. See also Ahlstrom, *Swedish Baptist Work in Iowa,* pp. 220–222; *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* 1882, p. 19.

[11] *Historical Sketch,* op. cit., p. 20. *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Jan. 4, 1888, p. 4.

[12] Ibid., pp. 26–27.

[13] Ibid., p. 33.

> How can we forget to honor the sacred memory of the immigrant shoemaker (Peter Peterson) who mortgaged his little home in America in order that the creditors who built the first house of worship for the Des Moines Swedish Baptist Church might get their pay according to the promise of the church of which he was a charter member.[14]

L. W. Linder ministered for two terms as pastor to the Des Moines church, 1892–1896, and 1903–1909, altogether for a period of ten years. In that time he had the joy of receiving into the membership not less than 133 persons.[15] Another long and successful pastorate was that of the pastor-evangelist Ernest Hall, who served the church 1926–1939. In the line of men whom God has used as pastors of the Des Moines Church there was one, namely, Gustaf Sword, 1917–1920, who became a foreign missionary. In 1921 Gustaf A. Sword and his wife began a long and successful ministry to the Kachins in northern Burma, where he became co-laborer and successor to Dr. Ola Hanson. Moreover, the Swedish Baptist Church of Des Moines has been permitted to send out from her midst quite a number of additional gospel workers both on the home and on the foreign field, such as Fredrik Linden, Eric Carlson, Carl Antonson, John A. Lindberg, Reuben Nelson, Edith Anderson, a missionary nurse to Ethiopia, and Edna Holm who together with her husband Reuben Holm, has served since 1932 as a missionary in Assam.

Davenport

As in so many other places, especially in the East, Olof Lindh pioneered in the matter of gospel preaching also in Davenport. This was in the year 1870 while he was ministering to the Swedish Baptists in Rock Island and Moline, across the Mississippi River from Davenport. In succeeding years other Rock Island preachers continued the good work started by Lindh. As a result of a revival conducted by John Ring, twenty-five believers were immersed in Davenport the year 1881. They all became members of the Rock Island church.[16] By 1889 the time seemed ripe to organize a church, which was done on March 10. Fifteen charter members, most of them coming from Rock Island, formed the new congregation.

For the first ten years, under the ministry of four different pastors, things looked quite promising for the group of believers in Davenport. However, a long period of discouragement ensued, beginning in 1899.

---

[14] Ahlstrom, op. cit., p. 224.

[15] *Historical Sketch,* op. cit., pp. 32–37.

[16] *Sixtieth Anniversary History,* Grand Avenue Baptist Church, Davenport, Ia. 1889–1949, p. 1.

From that time until 1913 the church was without a permanent leader. All credit to the faithful few who refused to give up! By the coming of Axel Wester in 1920 to assume the pastoral work, the tide turned. He remained as pastor of the Davenport church until his death in 1927. In recent years the progress has been outstanding. From a membership of 71 in 1932, when Lawrence Selin became pastor, serving for eight years,[17] the church reported 357 members in 1951, with a Sunday school enrollment of 331. The two pastors who succeeded Selin experienced remarkable growth and development of the church both in number and spiritual power. It is, of course, evident that without a large group of gifted and consecrated lay workers such results could not have been attained.

OTHER CHURCHES IN IOWA

As seen in Chapter Six there was a Swedish Baptist church organized in Burlington by F. O. Nilsson and Gustaf Palmquist on March 26, 1854. It was also noted that that church was short-lived; the very next year practically the whole congregation accompanied by F. O. Nilsson, moved to Scandia, Minnesota, where they started Swedish Baptist work.

The present church, the Woodlawn Avenue Baptist Church was formed with thirteen charter members June 12, 1881. Seven more persons joined by confession, making the total membership twenty. By November the number had increased to thirty.[18] It really became a struggle for existence for the small group of immersed believers at Burlington. One reason, no doubt, in the early years the retarded growth was perhaps the result of exceedingly short pastorates. A loyal group of saints, however, held the fort for Christ throughout the years. As early as 1888 that handful of members erected a rather stately church building, a project which by many was considered a stupendous undertaking. To quote L. J. Ahlstrom:

> As we now look back we are forced to admit that there were heroes in those days: beginning the task with 37 members, the pastor not in robust health, finished the building project, kept the membership growing at the same time, and retained the faith and the confidence of the neighborhood. This, it must be admitted, was an achievement worth recording.[19]

The faith of the early saints has been rewarded. In later years the church has experienced an encouraging growth.

---

[17] Ibid., pp. 3–9.

[18] Ahlstrom, op. cit., pp. 207–208. *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* 1881, pp. 130, 131; 247.

[19] Ahlstrom, op. cit., p. 212.

The Arthur community is near Kiron. In the middle seventies a number of people from Kiron began moving north to take possession of the rich, rolling prairie land in the Arthur area. Again it was the ever present land hunger which was such a potent factor in the great westward movement in America. Among the first settlers who came were Hans Hallander and other Baptists from Kiron.[20] Hallander began holding meetings in his own home, which became a veritable Bethany for friends and guests who served the Lord, as it had been even in their primitive sod home on the Kiron settlement.[21] The preaching resulted in the conversion of lost souls and, especially by means of a gracious revival in 1883–1884, there were many added to the number of believers.

On October 25, 1885, the converts who had joined the Kiron church met and organized a Swedish Baptist congregation in Arthur. The charter members were fifteen in number. As an indication of the days of small beginning the treasurer's report at the end of the first year, 1885, two months after the church was formed, is of peculiar interest. It reads as follows: "Income $2.35; Disbursements $2.30; Balance $.05."[22] Only two years later the small group of believers had faith and courage to erect a meetinghouse. Characteristic of the pioneers, their integrity and honesty, is the following entry in the secretary's minutes for April 6, 1887: "We have today come to an agreement with John Jacobson who has consented to build the church for a wage of $200. The building shall be finished September first. The work shall be done well and carefully. (Arbetet skall göras gott och försiktigt)"[23] Hans Hallander, who was a good preacher and the first pastor of the church, made all the pews. These handmade pews are the only ones still in use, and they still seat the congregation comfortably.

The Arthur church never grew large in membership. In 1913 the number had reached 125, and decreased to 108 in 1951. But spiritual values are not always measured by statistics. To have members of a good report and in whose Christian character the whole community has confidence, is indeed a rare asset for any church. Said a mother of one of the Sunday school superintendents: "If for any reason the children did not attend Sunday school for one Sunday or more, Mr. Levin would always walk over some evening to inquire about their absence." And another comment about the same man, "There is no one in all the world that I have thought more of than Hans Levin."[24] With such building material the Kingdom of God is sure, by His grace, to be an enduring structure.

---

[20] Ibid., p. 237. *Sixty Years of History,* Arthur Baptist Church, Arthur, Ia. 1885–1945, pp. 7–8.

[21] Hallander was a man of great order and took much interest in the preservation of Swedish Baptist history. Many copies of *Nya Wecko-Posten,* and other historical matter, now kept in the archives of the Swedish Baptist Historical Society, are from his personal collection.

[22] *Sixty Years History,* op. cit., p. 11. See also *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Dec. 3, 1885, p. 4, and Nov. 1, 1910, p. 5.

[23] Ibid., p. 12.

In recent years five more churches have been added in Iowa, namely, at Fort Dodge, organized in 1947; Williamson, 1947; Iowa City, 1949; Cedar Rapids, 1949, and Cedar Falls, 1950.

CHURCHES IN SOUTH DAKOTA

In an earlier chapter (Ch. Eight) the story of the beginning of Swedish Baptist work in South Dakota has been related. That was at Big Springs where a church was founded in 1869. At present there are eleven churches in the state with a combined membership of 1,262. As in other areas, a few churches have gone out of existence or have been absorbed by the Baptist State convention.

Dalesburg

It was in 1871, the epochal year in Swedish Baptist history, that the Dalesburg church, formerly known as Bloomingdale, was organized.

The first settlers to locate in the Dalesburg area arrived from Sweden, from the provinces of Dalarne and Hälsingland, in the early part of 1868. Several of the pioneers were believers, and a few Baptists who, like Abraham of old, erected an altar to the true God.[25] They met in the primitive sod houses to read the Scriptures and to pray and thus be upbuilded in their most holy faith. The first Swedish Baptist missionary to visit the field was P. A. Ring from Big Springs who, on June 14, 1871, had the joy of immersing four believers. These, together with three who were Baptists from Sweden, united to form the Swedish Baptist church at Bloomingdale October 15, 1871.[26]

For several years the progress, though not phenomenal, was steady and wholesome. Souls were being saved and added to the church. The years 1875–1876 brought a rich harvest of converts, for it pleased God to visit the church and the community with a gracious outpouring of the

---

[24] Ibid., pp. 17–18.

[25] *History* of the Dalesburg Church (MS) 1871–1900.

[26] *History* of the Dalesburg Church, p. 3. See also *Svenska Standaret,* November 1, 1921, p. 3.

Spirit. As a result twenty-five additions to the church were recorded.[27] However, storms and trials were in the offing. Internal dissension and the Seventh Day Adventism heresy devastated the little flock of Baptist believers for several years. In 1877 the leader of the church was excluded, a few years later not less than fourteen members had to be treated in the same manner, and in 1892 eleven more members were disfellowshipped. In fact, during the first twenty-nine years, in which time 108 souls had followed Christ in baptism, not less than 67 members were dropped from the church roll.[28] In later years, with able leadership and good cooperation from the membership, the Dalesburg church has not only held its own but has made healthy progress, counting in 1951, 99 members.

Strandburg

In the spring of 1880 Eric M. Dahlberg together with his wife and his brother, Nels A. Dahlberg, emigrated from Kil in the province of Värmland, Sweden, and settled on homesteads in the northeastern corner of South Dakota. Their coming really laid the foundation of Swedish Baptist work in the Strandburg area, for those immigrants were real Christians and did not put their light under a bushel. They had been converted and immersed in Sweden. Eric Dahlberg, who was a gifted lay preacher, gathered the settlers for divine worship in the sod houses, and held Sunday school with the children. J. A. H. Johnson, at that time pastor in nearby Ortonville, Minnesota, also made several preaching tours to the Strandburg settlement. The gospel seed fell into good soil; several conversions followed, and some accepted the New Testament teaching and were immersed. These, twenty-two in number, organized the Swedish Baptist church of Strandburg, June 25, 1882.[29]

For the major part of the first fifteen years, or more, the faithful farmer-preacher Eric Dahlberg, served as pastor and spiritual leader of the church. In the group of good men who have proclaimed the Word in Strandburg during the last fifty years, Olof Lind, the profound and warm-hearted theologian-preacher of Minnesota, holds a prominent place. He served the church at two different times, 1901–1904, and 1910–1915.[30] The membership in 1951 had reached 73.

---

[27] *History* of the Dalesburg Church, p. 4.

[28] Ibid., p. 12.

[29] *Trettiofem-Års Jubileum,* Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Standburg, So. Dak., 1882–1917, pp. 3–7. See also Manuscript History, 1882–1900.

[30] *Trettiofem-Års Jubileum,* op. cit., pp. 12–13.

Sioux Falls

At present this church is the largest Conference Baptist church in South Dakota. Its beginning, however, like that of most churches, was very modest. For it was only eight persons who constituted the congregation on May 19, 1883. At the time Sioux Falls was a growing, thriving city, having a population of about 5,000 people. Approximately one half of these were Scandinavians, the most of them being Norwegians. C. J. Johnson, who was then pastor of the Danish Baptist church at Dell Rapids, began holding religious services in Sioux Falls in the summer of 1882,[31] meeting in private homes as well as in rented halls for services. The work took organized form the following year. Present at the meeting of organization were six young people who gave their confession of faith and requested membership in the newly formed church. Their request was granted and the following day, Sunday, May 20, they were immersed in the Sioux River by Pastor C. J. Johnson.[32]

With a mind to work, the believers soon set about to lay plans for the erection of a meetinghouse. An unpretentious building with a seating capacity of 200 was completed at a cost of $2,000 in the spring of 1884, only one year after the founding of the church. A. B. Nordberg became the first permanent pastor, serving 1884–1886. At least two reasons may be found for the slow growth of the church during the first forty years of its history. In the first place, the frequent changes of pastors did not promote an aggressive and well balanced work. Secondly, the church was for a long time limited in its field of activity by reason of the fact that there has never been a large number of Swedish people in Sioux Falls. Moreover, for thirty years the Swedish language was used almost exclusively, and for ten years more the bilingual preaching failed to appeal to any but Swedish people. However, by 1925 the English language prevailed opening up a larger field of opportunity and a greater growth for the church. Then, too, the long term of service, 1925–1939, of Gordon Hasselblad, with a Bible centered preaching and emphasis on the Spirit-filled life, undoubtedly laid a good foundation for more recent progress. Succeeding pastors, Earl Widen, 1939–42, and Maurice Wessman, since 1942, have continued to lead the church to victory. The membership in 1951 had reached the impressive number of 382.

---

[31] *Historical Sketch,* Central Baptist Church, Sioux Falls, So. Dak., 1883–1933, p. 1. See also History of Swedish Baptist Conference of South Dakota (MS), p. 5.

[32] *Historical Sketch,* op. cit., p. 2.

Sun Prairie

Baptist settlers located here in the early eighties. Of great importance for the Baptist cause was the coming, in 1883, of C. M. Widen. Although a carpenter by trade, he had done considerable preaching in Sweden. Before long, the immersed believers, eight in number, united themselves to form a Swedish Baptist church, on June 3, 1883. Widen became both the chosen and natural leader of the little group.[33] A comparatively steady increase in membership was experienced. In 1897 there were twelve additions by baptism, and in 1899 twenty-six.[34] The first eight years the church was ably served by C. M. Widen and other lay preachers. For another eight years, 1891–1899, the pulpit was primarily filled by students from the Theological Seminary in Morgan Park. In spreading the gospel, especially in its soul saving efforts, tent meetings were held in the summer time here as in other churches of the state. These meetings, usually conducted by state missionaries such as Jacob Olsen, Andrew Swartz, and others, resulted in many conversions, as well as in the edifying and strengthening of the saints. With a sanctuary erected in the year 1900, and from that time on having permanent pastors to minister in the gospel, the Sun Prairie church, in spite of some severe trials, has made comparatively good progress. The membership was 111 in 1951.

Lake Norden

In the year 1880 four Baptists from the province of Närke, Sweden, emigrated to Sioux City, Iowa where they stayed until the following year when they settled in Lake Norden, South Dakota. One of the four was A. P. Palm. He had been Sunday school superintendent and lay preacher in his home church at Lännäs, Sweden, and it was only natural that he should do what he could to spread the gospel light in his adopted country. His brother John followed Christ in baptism in 1888. Then they were five immersed believers who formed the Baptist church of Lake Norden, September 17, 1888.[35]

This church for several reasons has never become strong as far as membership is concerned. However, it has the distinction, which very few churches ever had, of having been served by the same pastor continuously for a period of thirty years, 1888–1918. It was the trusted and well beloved lay preacher, A. P. Palm, who held the fort for Christ all those years. After him younger men continued the good work.

---

[33] *Trettioårs Minne,* Sun Prairie Svenska Baptistförsamling, 1883–1913, p. 3.

[34] *Historical Sketch* of the Sun Prairie church, 1883–1900 (MS).

[35] *Fiftieth Anniversary,* Swedish Baptist Church, Lake Norden, South Dakota, 1888–1938, p. 5.

Alcester

In June of 1893 the first Baptist family, by the name of A. P. Johnson, moved to Alcester from Big Springs, 7 miles away. By 1901 the Baptist group at Alcester, most of whom had come from Big Springs, numbered a score or more.[36] That year a Sunday school was organized which from its very beginning proved a success and a source of great blessing to the entire community. In 1916 it had reached an enrollment of 173. A Ladies' Aid, formed in 1902, became an additional factor in preparing the spiritual soil of the community. After a few years, or to be exact, by 1907, a sufficient number of Baptists had located in Alcester to make it advisable to organize a church. This took place on April 28, 1907, thirty of the charter members coming from Big Springs and four from Valley, Nebraska. Under the leadership of talented preachers, the church experienced a balanced growth and development. In the early years especially, a number of so-called revival campaigns were held, with prominent evangelists as speakers. These resulted in a considerable influx of members, as follows: after the campaign in 1913 there were 25 baptisms; in 1914, 31 baptisms; in 1922, 17 baptisms; in 1925–1926, 33 baptisms; and in 1930, 27 baptisms. The membership at the twenty-fifth anniversary in 1932 had reached 177. In 1951 it was 170.

Probably the shortest pastorate in the Alcester church was that of E. S. Lindblad who was not suffered to remain there more than about one year. Lindblad was one of God's noblemen! He probably did not become one of the more prominent among Swedish Baptist ministers, but most certainly in integrity of character and personal consecration he has few equals. Of him the Master's statement, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile," is peculiarly appropriate. His sudden and unexpected translation, at the age of fifty-nine, is vividly narrated in the Twenty-five Years History of the church.

> On September 8, 1929, the church had a very sad experience in the loss by death of its beloved pastor, E. S. Lindblad. He suffered a stroke while delivering the Sunday morning sermon. He was getting toward the close when he seemed to totter and his voice became weak and irregular. We did not understand, but his daughter did; and she ran up to him on the platform and helped him to his chair. She also announced a song and led in prayer. The pastor then arose to pronounce the benediction, which

---

[36] *A Short History* of the First 25 Years of Alcester Baptist Church, S. D., 1907–1932, p. 1.

he could not finish. He was carried home and made as comfortable as possible on a cot. About one o'clock the following night, September 9, 1929, he passed away. He was our pastor for one year, one month, one week, one day, and one hour. The remains were taken to Oakland, Nebraska, for burial, and about thirty of our members attended.[37]

There are two other Conference Baptist churches in South Dakota: Marvin, organized November 24, 1907, had in 1951 a membership of 38. Ramsey, formed February 21, 1913, had a membership of 112 in 1951. Of the twelve North Dakota Swedish Baptist churches which existed some thirty years ago, only two remain in the Conference fellowship today, namely, Kulm, organized July 4, 1892, having a membership in 1951 of 72, and Drayton, which was organized in 1918. Both of these churches now belong to the Minnesota Conference.

A new church, however, was organized at Minot in 1951. The work is very promising, being aided by a far-reaching radio program. The Minot church is a member of the South Dakota Conference.

CHURCHES IN THE PLATTE VALLEY AREA

In Nebraska possibly more Swedish Baptist churches, comparatively speaking, than in any other area of the country either disbanded or joined the American Baptist State Convention. Not less than sixteen such churches are listed by Carl J. Seaquist.[38] In the era of language transition from Swedish to English some churches appeared to respond too slowly to the rising demands of the times, and consequently fell by the wayside. On the other hand, some churches saw no future for a separate Conference work and joined the State Convention. To indicate the downward trend: In the General Conference Annual for 1904–1905 there are listed 20 churches in Nebraska. By 1940 that number had been reduced to 11, including two churches in Colorado. However, during the last few years the picture has decidedly changed to brighter colors. Several new churches have been organized, and a few have transferred their affiliation from other Baptist groups into the Conference fellowship. The Platte Valley Conference reported 20 churches in 1951, with a combined membership of 2,034. The story of the Oakland church, organized in 1869, is told in Chapter Eight.

Stromsburg

In the eighteen-eighties this place became known in the entire denomination especially for two reasons: Edgren's Theological Seminary was located there three years; a controversy over the doctrine of the Atonement between Edgren and the Seminary on the one hand and Pastor A. P. Ekman on the other hand occurred there.

---

[37] Ibid., p. 13

[38] Carl J. Seaquist, *History of the Platte Valley Baptist Conference* 1872–1947, pp. 97–106.

As early as 1872, being a part of the great westward movement after the Civil War, a group of Swedish Baptists came from Illinois and Iowa and located in the Stromsburg district.[39] The next year others of the same faith from Iowa joined the ranks of the pioneers. On July 12, 1873, fourteen immersed believers met at the farm home of Matts Samuelson, two miles west of Stromsburg, for the purpose of organizing a New Testament church. The same day C. Lundgren was immersed, and ordained as pastor of the church.[40] This faithful farmer-preacher, while supporting himself and his family by the sweat of his brow on his farm, served the church as minister for the first six years. By that time, in 1879, the membership had reached 100. In 1876 the first meetinghouse was constructed at a cost of about $800.00, plus considerable volunteer labor.

An item from the early history of the church throws some light on faith and practice of the pioneer period, and is of more than ordinary interest.

> At every business meeting the chairman asked about the condition of the church, and certain acts of the members were investigated. One member was excluded for playing cards, and another because of a dispute with P. G. Anderson. Those must have been days when people did not fear to assume religious responsibilities.[41]

The coming of A. P. Ekman, who later became one of the foremost pastors in the Swedish Baptist group, marked a period of great victories and sad controversies. In a great revival tide many turned to Christ, were immersed and added to the church. Backsliders were restored, and several who had left the church returned. The old church became too small. A new and commodious sanctuary was erected in 1886. The teachers and students of the theological seminary became members of the church, and exerted a tremendous influence on the events of the years that followed. The missionary spirit of the school was felt throughout the state, and particularly in the immediate environment.[42]

---

[39] Ibid., p. 33. See also *Fifty-fifth Anniversary History,* First Baptist Church, Stromsburg, Neb. 1873–1928, p. 2; and C. R. Osbeck, *Minnes Album,* Svenska Baptisterna i Nebraska, 1869–1919, p. 31.

[40] *Anniversary History,* op. cit., p. 3; Osbeck, op. cit., p. 31; Seaquist, op. cit., p. 33.

[41] *Anniversary History,* op. cit., p. 3.

[42] Seaquist, op. cit., p. 35.

Then, beginning in 1886, there fell like a bomb shell in that peaceful community of saints the controversy concerning the doctrine of the Atonement. It will be set forth in greater detail in a later chapter. However, the school family including Edgren and his fellow teacher N. N. Morten, together with the student body, took sharp issue with Pastor Ekman on his view of the Atonement. The majority of the church membership stood by their pastor. The others, fifty-two in number, organized another church March 7, 1887, which was called "The Regular Swedish Baptist Church." Under Edgren's leadership, the separatist church held meetings in the school building. Ekman continued his labors with the Stromsburg church a year and a half after the division, closing his work November 1, 1888. Through the mediation of a council, a reunion of the daughter and mother church was effected October 28, 1890. The members of the daughter church brought with them their pastor, C. W. Sundmark. Six members, however, were dismissed because of doctrinal defection.

But a group of men were dissatisfied with the manner in which the reconciliation of the church had taken place. They made the sad mistake, in the last days of Sundmark's pastorate, of locking up the church one Sunday. Instead of calmly discussing the trouble, the whole matter was thrust into the courts and had to be settled before a judge. The final outcome was the organization of an English speaking church composed, to a large extent, of former members of the original church.[43]

After the strife and storm were over and under the leadership of unusually talented pastors throughout the years, the Stromburg church experienced smooth sailing and a comparatively good success. In 1923 the membership had reached 257. The following few years there was a slight decline to 230 in 1932. On October 6, 1933, the Swedish and the American Baptist church were merged, bringing the membership up to 300. As stated above, the American church, the Eden Baptist Church, was an offshoot from the Swedish Baptist church during the days of strife and division. The new church under a new name, the Stromsburg Baptist Church, cooperates in its missionary activity with the Nebraska State Convention and the American Baptist Convention on the one hand, and with the Platte Valley Conference and the General Conference on the other hand.

CHURCHES IN OMAHA

Omaha is the largest and most important city in Nebraska. The great highway from the east to the west led through Omaha, and, in the great westward migration after the Civil War, it was only natural that some descendants of the old Vikings should stop at the gateway to the large prairie state. As early as 1866 there were a few Swedish and Danish Baptists in Omaha, meeting together for religious services. Largely through the efforts of N. C. Jensen, a student pastor who was supported by the American Baptist Home Mission Society, a Scandinavian Baptist church was organized in 1869. A small chapel was secured, and for a few years the church apparently flourished. After some time, however, the good work terminated, due to the removal of most of the members.[44]

---

[43] Ibid., p. 35. Osbeck, op. cit. pp. 35–39. *Anniversary History,* op. cit., p. 4.

But the foundation that had been laid still remained. For on November 7, 1880, the First Swedish Baptist Church (now Bemis Park Baptist) was organized with fifteen charter members, a few of whom had belonged to the original group. The church was fortunate in receiving as its first pastor, in January, 1882, N. Hayland. For a few years previous to this he had labored successfully as a missionary in Iowa and Nebraska. His classmate, C. Silene, described Hayland in the following terms: "Brother Hayland was both Moody and Sankey in one and the same person, a good speaker, singer and musician, and a good organizer."[45] He did a very good work in evangelizing the Swedish immigrants and building up the church.

The Omaha church has probably experienced more ups and downs in its history than has the average church. Under the leadership of the tactful and consecrated L. Arlander, who succeeded Hayland in 1884, great victories were achieved. A new home of worship was erected in 1885, and the membership had reached a high of 146 when Arlander resigned in 1888. Then followed six years of declension and discouragement, while not less than five different pastors, each for a few months, tried in vain to revive the dispirited saints. With the coming of Petrus Swartz in 1894, and his successor, Carl Vingren, the former China missionary, in 1898, a new day dawned. Many lost sinners were saved and added to the group and, in 1901, at the close of Vingren's term of service, the membership reached 187, which remains the high water mark in the history of the church.[46]

Again a spiritual drought set in for a long period of some thirty-four years, in which the membership declined steadily to a low ebb of 54 in 1934. To the credit of more than a dozen pastors, who ministered to the Omaha church in that dark period, and to the members, the faithful few, it should be said that the gospel light was never permitted to go out. Some souls were being saved and added to the church. Also, under C. A. Segerstrom's leadership, 1920–1924, a beautiful sanctuary was erected, being dedicated to divine worship in June, 1921. A year or two later an excellent parsonage was also built.

---

[44] Osbeck, *Minnes Album*, op. cit., p. 54. Seaquist, *Platte Valley Bapt. Conference*, op. cit., p. 49.

[45] Cited by Osbeck, op. cit., p. 86.

[46] Seaquist, op. cit., p. 50.

A brighter day dawned in 1935. In that year Harold Wilson, dean of the Omaha Bible Institute, accepted a call to become pastor of the church. He was an unusually energetic, talented, humble and sincere preacher and pastor. The people rallied around him, and new confidence and faith revived the life of the church. The indebtedness on the church and the parsonage was reduced, and the Sunday school attendance grew within a short time from a low of 40 in 1935 to 200. A quiet but powerful revival prevailed in the Omaha church.[47] The membership continued to grow until it reached 155 in 1951.

It was the warm missionary zeal of Pastor L. Arlander during his first term, 1884–1888, as pastor in Omaha that led him to start gospel work on the south side of the city. Those services were begun in 1886. Three years later a small chapel was built and, through the efforts of Arlander and others, several persons experienced the new life in Christ. The work continued to function as a mission of the Omaha church until April 19, 1896, when a church was organized with sixteen charter members.[48] Peter Lovene, a gifted Bible scholar and author became the first pastor. A steady, if not rapid growth was experienced during the first twenty-five years, bringing the membership up to 75 in 1921. Nevertheless, as in the case of the mother church, a period of discouragement and spiritual declension almost undermined the work of the South Omaha church. In fact, when L. Arlander terminated a ten years fruitful ministry in 1924, many thought that the church had no future, and that the final chapter would be written at any time. A number of the members had their letters transferred and joined English speaking churches in Omaha, and the membership dropped to 38.[49]

A few, however, still believed that God would revive His work in South Omaha. They tarried week after week in prayer before the Lord. In 1925, C. V. Anderson, at that time state missionary in Nebraska, accepted a call to the church. His sixteen years of service

[47] Ibid., p. 50–54.

[48] *Historical Sketch,* the Second Swedish Baptist Church, South Omaha, Nebr., 1896–1930, p. 5. See also Osbeck, *Minnes Album,* op. cit., p. 63, and Seaquist, op. cit., p. 55.

[49] Seaquist, op. cit., p. 59.

proved to be God's means of bringing new life to the discouraged church. Conversions followed, and again the baptismal waters were stirred by people who wanted to follow their Master all the way. An important factor in the new progress was the fact that English was adopted for all public services, and that the transition took place in the most friendly and congenial way, which was not always the case in some churches.[50] The membership climbed to 98 by 1951.

Gothenburg

In south central Nebraska is a city with the Swedish name of Gothenburg (Göteborg). Of the pioneers who settled there in the early part of the eighteen-eighties, several came directly from Sweden. A few of them were Baptists. In the group, as was nearly always the case on the American frontier, there was a lay preacher who was able and anxious to proclaim the gospel among his countrymen. His name was Eric P. Erickson. The seed planted fell into good soil and resulted in the formation of a Swedish Baptist church on June 19, 1883.[51] Erickson served the small group as pastor the first three years. In 1891, when A. B. Nordberg, who was the first regular minister, terminated a four years charge, the membership had increased to 67.

The Gothenburg church did not escape the hardship of pioneer life. In the first half of the nineties the great drought that continued for several years played havoc with the poor population in the rural areas of Nebraska. The economic pressure made it difficult to carry on regular church work. Yet the poor believers had faith in God to call a preacher, A. O. Arnquist, who accepted the pastorate in 1894 and served for two years. He soon discovered, however, that the people were suffering for the very necessities of life. No crops were raised, the cattle died and people began to leave the country. In order to help the church to survive this crisis, Pastor Arnquist went east to ask the assistance of sister churches. He was successful in that venture, which the members naturally appreciated immensely. What is really marvellous, under the grace of God, is the fact that in the midst of poverty and suffering the church experienced a steady growth numerically and spiritually.[52]

During the ministry of Carl Hasselblad, 1920–1927, the membership increased from 123 to 198. In the last two decades under the leadership of good pastors the Gothenburg church has grown strong in several respects, having a membership in 1951 of 219.

---

[50] Ibid., pp. 59–60.

[51] Osbeck, *Minnes Album,* op. cit., p. 66. Seaquist, op. cit., p. 64. See also *Svenska Standaret,* Aug. 12, 1924.

[52] Seaquist, *Platte Valley Baptist Conference,* op. cit., pp. 66–67.

Denver, Colorado

The Swedish Baptist work in the one mile high city of Denver had a very humble beginning indeed. God had touched the hearts of four women, who, like the devout women in Philippi, were wont to gather for prayer; they were burdened concerning the conversion of several of their friends. One of the four ladies wrote to J. A. Edgren and asked that a student from the seminary, at that time located at Stromsburg, Nebraska, come to Denver and preach the gospel. August Olson was commissioned for this task and arrived at Denver in the month of May, 1886. Heroic sacrifices and utmost privation, indeed, became the lot of that student preacher. To quote his own words, "It may seem radical when I tell you that I had only one good meal a day and lived on $20.00 for the whole summer."[53] But God's grace was sufficient for His servant. The meetings were well attended, sinners were saved, and plans made for the organization of a church, which took place August 1, 1886.[54] Before the student returned to the seminary in the fall there was a membership of fourteen in the Denver church.

The talented Axel Tjernlund became the first pastor. Broken in health, yet with a faith unwavering, he labored heroically on the spiritually rocky soil of Denver. His first term there lasted two years, 1886–1888, and he returned for a second two year period of service 1898–1900. At that time he found the church disunited and torn by doctrinal controveries. Some progress was made, and a measure of unity was achieved. However, there were some things that even a pastor who was known as the "Silver Tongued" among the Swedish Baptists of that day could not do. For the discord of the church and the lack of a sufficiently enthusiastic gain in the membership created a sense of futility in the faithful preacher and led him to submit his resignation.[55]

Beginning with Tjernlund, the church has been served by devoted and well qualified ministers. The work, however, has not been easy and has frequently been marked by hardships and difficulties. For about forty years the membership was maintained at approximately

---

[53] Cited in *Fiftieth Anniversary History,* Immanuel Baptist Church, Denver, Colo. 1886–1936, pp. 6, 7

[54] *Församlings-Facklan,* Jubileumsnummer, July–August, 1926.

[55] *Fiftieth Anniversary,* op. cit., pp. 7–13. Seaquist, op. cit. pp. 83–90.

150. Of late, however, with a new location and a new church building, considerable gains have been made. The membership in 1951 was 238. A new church in a promising field was organized at Edgewater, Colorado, in 1950.

OTHER CHURCHES IN THE PLATTE VALLEY CONFERENCE

About 1870 settlers began to move into the country around Weston, Nebraska. Among these were a number of Baptists from Sweden. Twelve of those immersed believers formed a Swedish Baptist church July 6, 1874.[56] The following year N. Hayland took up the work as pastor of the small group at Weston. He remained for seven years and became instrumental in leading several to a saving knowledge of Christ. Another seven years' pastorate, 1891–1898, was ably filled by A. B. Nordberg. At the turn of the century, however, a number of the members moved away. This and other factors interfered with a normal development of the church. But in spite of difficulties a faithful few have held the fort. In 1951 a membership of 34 was reported.

One Conference church in Nebraska, namely Oakland, was organized in 1869, and the following three were formed in the seventh decade of the nineteenth century: Stromsburg, 1873, Weston, 1874, and Hordville, 1878. In the Hordville area, located near to Stromsburg, Swedes began to settle in 1872. A few of these were believers. C. Lundgren, the energetic lay preacher in Stromsburg, realized that the field was white unto harvest, and did not fail to make use of the opportunity to preach Christ in Hordville. Before long God's word began to work miracles in the lives of men, and in a gracious revival several turned to the Lord. Frequently the baptismal waters were stirred, with the result that in a period of four years, 1874–1878, not less than 29 were immersed. On December 18, 1878, a Swedish Baptist church was organized in Hordville.[57]

It is interesting to note some of the early methods used to finance the church program. When their financial problems first appeared in the spring of 1879, it was decided by common consent of the church to levy a tax of five cents per member a week. Later on it was decided that a certain per cent of the crop raised by each member should go into the church treasury. Evidently this did not prove satisfactory, for only a little later each member was taxed $5.00 each year for every 40 acres of land he possessed.

---

[56] Osbeck. *Minnes Album,* op. cit., p. 24. Seaquist, op. cit. p. 41. See also *Nya Wecko-Posten,* August 8, 1894, p. 1.

[57] *Fiftieth Anniversary Souvenir Bulletin,* Hordville Baptist Church, Nebr. 1878–1928, pp. 1–2.

Something extraordinary, and undoubtedly seldom equalled in any other church, is observed in the records of the Hordville congregation, namely, the fact that the same man served as pastor at four different periods. The honor goes to Oscar F. Tornquist, well beloved by the Hordville people. First he came there as a student pastor in 1898. Then he served as regular pastor, 1899–1903; 1912–1918; and 1920–1924. By the end of his third term in 1917, the membership had reached the highest number in its history, namely 107.[58]

On May 10, 1885 a Swedish Baptist church was organized at Balsora (Arcadia), in central Nebraska. Sod shanties, prairie fires and the fact that the settlement was located some sixty miles from the nearest railroad point, all indicate something of the hardship and privation of the pioneers on this Nebraska frontier. The first meeting-house was a small sod church, 16 feet by 20 feet on the inside. In 1902 a modest frame structure was built, only to be completely destroyed by a tornado in 1904. Not to be daunted, the few believers went to work immediately to erect a new house of worship, which was completed after some three months.[59] The gospel work was in charge of farmer preachers the first twenty-five years. Since 1908 full time pastors, with frequent and long intermissions between the different charges, have ministered to the church. In membership the Balsora church has never been large, reporting 66 members in 1951. However, spiritual values can never be measured by numbers. The small beacon light on the prairie undoubtedly has pointed many who were lost in the darkness of sin to Him who is the Light of the World.

The Conference church at Albin, Wyoming was organized in the summer of 1890, at Salim, some eleven miles southwest of Albin. In 1900 the work was moved across the state line to Gary, Nebraska, and the church was reorganized. Again, in 1933, the church returned to Wyoming, locating at Albin, about three miles west of Gary.[60] A notably long and fruitful ministry in the Albin church was that of J. A. Nordstrom, who shepherded the flock for thirteen years, 1925–1938.

In Greeley, Colorado a church was formed December 6, 1901, and reorganized in 1906. By 1930 the membership had reached 40, and in 1951, 80, with a flourishing Sunday school of 173. The Lindberg,

---

[58] Ibid., pp. 3–4. See also Seaquist, op. cit., pp. 44–47.

[59] Seaquist, *Platte Valley Baptist Conference,* op. cit., pp. 73–78. Osbeck, op. cit., pp. 76–77.

[60] Ibid., pp. 91–92.

Wyoming, church was originally a branch of the Albin church. It was organized as an independent congregation in 1930. In 1947 a Conference church was founded at Ord, Nebraska, and in recent years three older churches have transferred their fellowship to the Conference, namely, Polk, Cairo, and Dannebrog.

CHURCHES IN KANSAS AND MISSOURI

As in other areas, there were several churches in Kansas and Missouri which did not survive. For instance, the twenty churches reported in 1918 had been reduced to 12 in 1929, and 8 in 1938. However, it is interesting to note that the numerical strength of the eight churches in 1938 was considerably greater than that of the twenty churches in 1918; for the combined membership in all the churches in 1918 was only 1,217, as over against 1,428 in 1938, and 1,586 in 1941. It indicates the inner vitality of the churches that survived, as well as their opportunity for continued expansion. The last year they appear as a conference in the General Conference Annual is the year 1942–1943. The church at Chanute, having been organized the first time in 1869, has been discussed in Chapter Eight.

Kansas City, Missouri

Most likely J. O. Drotts was the first Swedish Baptist to settle in Kansas City, Missouri. He was followed in 1868 by J. A. Bengtson, a lay preacher from Sweden, who had been immersed by Anders Wiberg in Stockholm, in 1861, and had had considerable experience as a preacher in the old country. Bengtson's preaching in Kansas City was blessed with several conversions, and not a few of the converts followed Christ in immersion and were united with the American Baptist church. Eighteen of those believers, with the good will of their brethren in the American church, united themselves together into a Swedish Baptist church January 21, 1872.[61] During the first few years lay preachers, or elders, ministered sacrificially in the preaching of the gospel, leading the church to victory. The first more permanent charge was that of C. A. Sandvall, who served the church as pastor 1884–1890. Progress in membership gain was not phenomenal but steady. At the twenty-fifth anniversary in 1897, 116 members were recorded.[62] Doctrinal dissension, however, decimated the membership considerably in the middle nineties, when in a few years not less than 89 were excluded and 109 were given letters of transfer. It was the "second blessing" teachings by Pastor Petrus Ostrom that caused the rift at that time. Many of those members later returned to the church, however.[63]

---

[61] P. Lovene, *History of the Swedish Baptist Churches of Kansas and Missouri,* 1869–1927, p. 18. See also *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Febr. 10, 1892, p. 4.

[62] Lovene, op. cit., p. 18. *Nya Wecko-Posten,* March 3, 1897.

The climax of outward achievement, no doubt, was reached when, under the leadership of J. G. Oster, 1919–1926, a magnificant sanctuary, being the third house of worship, was erected at a cost of $70,000.00. The whole property however, was valued at $150,000.00. It was a tremendous undertaking for a membership which was not much over 200. In order to reach a larger field of population, the Swedish was dropped as a church language, probably rather suddenly, and the English was introduced. The name of the church also was changed to the Broadway Baptist Church. In the early nineteen-thirties, under the leadership of Albert Dahlby, the church severed its fellowship with the Conference Baptists.

Concordia, Kansas

The first settlers came in 1869 and 1870 from the island of Gotland, located off the east coast of Sweden, in the Baltic Sea. These immigrants homesteaded in a territory a few miles to the northeast of Concordia in a district known even today as the Gotland settlement. Most of the newcomers had been Baptists in Sweden, and naturally continued to witness for Christ in the New World. They met regularly for Bible reading, singing of hymns, and prayer. As these believers were looking about for a spiritual leader, it happened that August Johnson, coming from Chicago, arrived in Kansas. To be sure, he had not gone to Kansas to preach. But as he saw the desperate need and soul hunger for the gospel among the poor pioneers on the Kansas frontier, he could not contain himself. The need constituted a call to service, and he began a house-to-house visitation, going from settlement to settlement, calling meetings and giving warm-hearted testimonies of God's redeeming grace. Journeying about, he came at last to the Gotland community, to which his name was destined to be linked. Later on he became affectionately known far and wide as "the Kansas Apostle."

As a result of Johnson's preaching and leadership in the Gotland community a Swedish Baptist church was organized there May 12,

---

[63] Lovene, op. cit., p. 18. See also *A Review of the History of Fifty Years, 1872–1922.* First Swedish Baptist Church, Kansas City, Mo. p. 25

1877. It became known as the Swedish Baptist Church of Concordia.[64] With August Johnson as leader, the small community of Baptists apparently had a bright future. The very next year a house of worship was erected, being the first of its kind built by Swedish Baptists in Kansas. However, August Johnson could not remain in one place very long, for he was by nature and calling a pioneer and a missionary. All of Kansas was his field for some thirty years, or until his death. But God had other men prepared and called to labor in Concordia. Faithfully they proclaimed the gospel story throughout the years.

The year 1924 became, in a sense, climactic for the Concordia church for in that year the Swedish Baptist Church united with the local American Baptist Church under the name of the Baptist Church of Concordia, with W. G. Holmberg as the first pastor. That marked the end of the Swedish Baptist Church as such. A new and commodious sanctuary was erected in 1926. The union brought about a membership of 340.[65]

Of special interest and worthy of mention is one of the sons of the Concordia church, namely, J. A. Huggerth. Having been born in the province of Östergötland, Sweden, August 23, 1862, he came with his parents to Concordia in 1872. At the age of 16 he was converted and united with the church. After being called to the ministry, graduating from the theological seminary in 1889, Huggerth spent most of his life preaching the gospel in Kansas, either as pastor or as state missionary. This included one term, 1898–1902, of successful leadership in his own home church of Concordia — a thing which is rare in the annals of preachers, and naturally speaks highly of his character.[66]

Kansas City, Kansas

This church is a daughter church of the Swedish Baptist Church of Kansas City, Missouri. It was organized with nine charter members August 20, 1879. Carl Adolf Schugren, one of their own number and a lay preacher from Sweden, became the first pastor and served in that capacity for six years. Together with August Johnson and A. J. Bengtson, Schugren constituted the trio of faithful lay preachers who in these early years were largely responsible for leading the Swedish Baptist work in Kansas to victory.[67]

---

[64] *Fifty Years* of Baptist Work in Concordia, Kansas, 1877–1927, p. 9. See also Lovene, op. cit., pp. 25–26; Huggerth and Nyquist, *A History of Swedish Baptist Churches of Kansas* (MS), 1881–1901; and *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Sept. 29, 1897, p. 4.

[65] Lovene, op. cit., pp. 26–27.

[66] Ibid., p. 29. *Fifty Years of Baptist Work in Concordia,* op. cit., p. 13.

After only a few years it became apparent that business houses and factories would soon crowd the Swedish Baptists out from their original site where a small meetinghouse had been erected. During the time when Christopher Silene served as pastor, 1886–1890, the church moved up to the hill district of the city where most of the members were then living and erected in 1888 a large church building. A revival in 1890 brought the membership up to 152. Once again, however, they were faced with the prospect of moving. By 1919 other nationalities of the Slavic race, such as Russians, Poles, and others, had made their homes around the church, and the Swedish people had located in better quarters of the city. This time, however, it was decided not to move but remain in the present location, and, by changing the church language into English, try to reach the foreign population of the area with the gospel. God honored their faith, and in 1940, the year that the Kansas City church withdrew its fellowship from the Swedish Conference, the membership had reached 294.

Lindsborg

In the year 1869 Olof Lindh came to this place and was most likely the first Swedish Baptist here. He came from Sundsvall, Sweden, where he had been a member of the Baptist church. In the course of a few years several more Swedish Baptists arrived in Lindsborg, which by reason of the Bethany College was fast becoming a Swedish Lutheran stronghold in America. Under the leadership of August Johnson, twelve immersed believers formed a Swedish Baptist church in Lindsborg on November 3, 1880. For some years little religious work was done.

In fact, discord among the members reached the breaking point, and on November 6, 1886, after discussion and prayer, it was decided to disband. However, those who were interested in continuing spiritual fellowship met and reorganized the church on November 20, 1886. In 1887 the youthful and warm-hearted Charles Palm, fresh from the Theological Seminary at Stromsburg, became pastor of the Lindsborg church. A revival broke out, the like of which had never before been seen in that community, and as a result five believers were immersed on Mid-summer Day, 1888. That was the first baptism by immersion ever performed in Lindsborg, and created quite a sensation in the community.[68]

---

[67] Lovene, op. cit., pp. 34, 39. See also *Historik,* a Brief Sketch of the Swedish Baptist Church of Kansas City, 1879–1901. (M.S.). — *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* 1882, p. 223. *Svenska Standaret,* October 14, 1919.

In a community as prevailingly and predominantly Lutheran as Lindsborg it was self-evident that the preaching of the New Testament teaching concerning a regenerated church membership and believers' immersion would not be readily received. Hence there was a struggle for existence on the part of the Baptists. That, too, may account for the frequent changes of pastors, some thirteen in the course of thirty-five years. In 1910 a membership of 107 was reported, reaching the highest peak in 1924 with 124 members. Then there was a decline to 93 in 1942, the year that the Kansas churches dissolved the Swedish Baptist State Conference.

Of more than ordinary interest is the story of one of the members of the Lindsborg church, namely P. O. Hegberg. Born and reared in northern Sweden, he emigrated at the age of twenty-two, and settled near Lindsborg on a farm. In the work of the Baptist church he took an active part, and served as clerk for several years. In 1914 he bought a stock farm of 400 acres near Eldorado, Kansas. Rich oil wells were found, and these made him almost overnight a rich man, some even said a millionaire. Hegberg, however, considered himself a steward of the Lord, and shared his wealth wisely and generously with many different Kingdom enterprises. Seeing the need of a new church building in Lindsborg he promised to give $6,000.00 if the church would raise a like amount. The result was a beautiful sanctuary at a cost of $17,500.00, dedicated for divine service May 25, 1919. That day was a great day in the Swedish Baptist church of Lindsborg.[69] Worthy of mention also is the fact that a young lad by the name of Eric N. Lindholm was brought to Christ and received his spiritual nurture in the Lindsborg church. That boy grew up to become a very eloquent preacher, and is today one of the prominent leaders among Conference Baptists.

Topeka

In the fall of 1877 there came from Stockholm, Sweden a family by the name of A. Ceasar who located in Topeka. Mrs. Ceasar had been baptized in Stockholm by Anders Wiberg, in 1863. Mr. Ceasar was immersed in Topeka the year following their arrival. August Johnson made his first visit to Topeka in the summer of 1879, and as a result of his preaching many believed on Christ and were immersed, especially after a public discussion on baptism. On January 1, 1881, twelve believers formed a church according to the New Testament pattern.[70] C. A. Sjogren became the first pastor. From its very beginning this church experienced considerable progress, especially during the years when Magnus Larson served as pastor, 1887–1891. The membership increased from 32 to 117, eighty-six of whom were received by baptism. A new church building replacing a smaller meetinghouse was also erected in that period.

---

[68] Lovene, op. cit., p. 45. *A History,* First Baptist Church Lindsborg, Kansas, 1880–1940, pp. 3–4.

[69] Lovene, op. cit., pp. 47–49. *History of Lindsborg Church,* op. cit., pp. 8–9.

A brief statement in the history of the Topeka church impressed this writer as being unusually pregnant with spiritual meaning. It happened in the dark days of the economic depression of the nineties, when the members had a desperate struggle to eke out a bare living and, in addition, were trying to pay off the debt on the new church building. Then, "the church adopted the tithing system and was able to pay its debt and became self-supporting."[71] A good example to follow!

The Topeka church has been blessed with two long pastorates. The first one was that of Allfrid Sjolander, under whose wise leadership, 1904–1912, the church was unified and progressed in every way. He was a man of strong principle and manifold gifts, a talented speaker, a deep thinker, a versatile writer and a great Bible teacher. As he unfolded God's book the spiritual life of the believers was strengthened, and many were saved and added to the church. His ministry in the Topeka church, no doubt, would have continued indefinitely had it not been for his apparently untimely death in December, 1912. The second long pastorate in this church began in October, 1922, when Albin Holmer entered upon a successful ministry that was destined to continue for twenty-five years. In that period the membership increased from 159 in 1922 to 365 in 1947.

On New Year's evening of 1900, a youth of seventeen by the name of Henry C. Wingblade was immersed into the fellowship of the Topeka church. As is well known, that man has been intimately associated with Bethel College and Seminary for a great number of years. Another one in whom the church takes great delight is Axel Osterholm, M.D. He is stationed at Vanga, Belgian Congo, where he is in charge of the Baptist hospital. In November of 1909 he became a member of the Topeka church. Fred Carlson, too, is a noble son of this church and one of its best workers. For a long time he used his talents as a wise and tactful Christian business man as manager of Sunset Home and Hospital, and it is generally agreed that he made that institution what it is today.[72]

---

[70] Lovene, op. cit., p. 51. *Golden Jubilee History,* West Side Baptist Church, Topeka, Kansas, 1881–1931, pp. 1–2. Huggerth and Nyquist, *History of the Swedish Baptists of Kansas,* op. cit., p. 24.

[71] Lovene, op. cit., p. 52.

As stated previously, the Swedish Baptist Conference of Kansas dissolved in 1942, and its seven churches joined the American Baptist State Convention of Kansas. The seven churches at that time had a combined membership of 1,276. If the two churches in Kansas City, Missouri, and Kansas City, Kansas, were included, the number of souls would approach the two thousand mark. In addition to the six churches whose story has been told, there were in 1942 three others, namely, Leonardville, formed 1878, with a membership of 12; Brantford, organized in 1883, with a membership of 43 in 1942; and Enterprise, founded in 1903, having a membership of 58 in 1942.

---

[72] *Golden Jubilee History, Topeka,* op. cit., pp. 35–36. Lovene, op. cit., p. 58.

CHAPTER TWENTY

CHURCHES ON THE WEST COAST

The churches located in this area cover a large territory all the way from San Diego, California in the south, to British Columbia, Canada, in the north. It is divided into the two conferences of California and Columbia. Since the Swedish Baptist work in the Pacific Northwest antedated that of California by two or three years, it is proper to begin the story there. The Columbia Conference has been reorganized several times in the last sixty years, the last time in 1930. An account of the conference as such will be given in a later chapter. It includes the immense territory of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and British Columbia. In extent it is the largest of all the state or district conferences of the Baptist General Conference, and comprises more than one fourth of the entire area of the United States of America. In 1951 the Columbia Conference had 33 churches with a combined membership of 4,622, ranking third in numerical strength in the General Conference.

CHURCHES IN THE COLUMBIA CONFERENCE

Very naturally, as in most other regions, the gospel work originated in the larger centers of population, such as Seattle, Portland, Tacoma, and Spokane. Then, in the course of time, missionary endeavor reached the smaller towns and the rural communities.

Seattle

In Ch. Fifteen the story of the missionary Olaus Okerson has been related. His restless spirit, prompted by a divine imperative, led him to become a pioneer in the Pacific Northwest. He reached Portland, Oregon, in January, 1881. Anxious to survey the large area to the north, then Washington territory, he extended his journey to the Puget Sound region the same spring. Seattle was then a small town with a population of 3,533. Okerson, however, had the vision of a pioneer and saw the future possibility of the city.

It may be of interest to know that there had been those who had not shared Okerson's optimistic view of the Pacific Northwest, which the following statement indicates:

> What is the character of this country? As I understand it, there are seven hundred miles on this (western) side of the Rocky Mountains that are uninhabited, where rain never falls, mountains wholly impassable except by going hundreds of miles out of a direct course . . . Of what use would the land be for agricultural purposes? I would not for that purpose give a pinch of snuff for the whole territory. I wish the Rocky Mountains were an impassable barrier. If there were an embankment of even five feet to be removed, I would not consent to spend five dollars to remove it and enable our population to go there. I thank God for His mercy in placing the Rocky Mountains there. . . .
>
> Of all the countries upon the face of the earth Oregon is one of the least favored by heaven. It is the mere riddlings of creation. It is almost as barren as Sahara and quite as unhealthy as the Campagna of Italy.[1]

Okerson gathered the few Swedes he could find for a religious service. In the early spring of 1882 he was led to purchase a lot for $500, located on Fourth Avenue between Pine and Olive streets. Subscriptions in the form of lumber, nails, doors, windows, and whatever else was available, were secured from interested friends. In a short time a two story house was built, with the second story to be used for a place of worship. The house was completed at a cost of $1,200 and dedicated in the early summer free of debt. What is remarkable about this venture of faith is the fact that Okerson built this meetinghouse before there was an organized church in Seattle. The same practice was followed in Tacoma and Portland.[2] The following year a Scandinavian Baptist church was formed in Seattle.

The Central Baptist Church

When Okerson arrived in Seattle in the spring of 1881, he found one Swedish Baptist, a sailor by the name of S. A. Haggstrom. In response to the gospel message some others also turned to the Lord. Of great encouragement to the small group of believers was the coming of Gustaf Liljeroth in the spring of 1883. He had been a pastor a few years among the Baptists in Sweden, and was a brilliant lecturer and humorist. "Among Swedish Baptists," says C. G. Lagergren,[3] "there has been only one Liljeroth." For a few years he pioneered in Seattle, Portland, and California. With Liljeroth as leader a Scandinavian Baptist church, composed of nine Swedes and two Danes, was organized June 3, 1883. The church was the first of its kind on the West Coast. Shortly afterwards Liljeroth left for Portland. During his short life of hardly forty years he roamed through a great part of the world, never staying very long in any place. Then followed a six months' pastorate by N. Christopherson, after which N. Hayland served for one year. Hayland, never in robust health, spent the remaining fifteen years of his life on the West Coast, and died at the age of fifty-four at Tacoma March 14, 1900. Under the ministry of Knut Nelson, a former Norwegian Free Church preacher, who had been immersed by Hayland in Tacoma, the Seattle church made great progress. A revival in 1887–1888 added 23 new converts, and 25, who had moved in to Seattle from the Middle West, were received by letter. Among those who came to the church at that time were August Lovegren and P. Benson, men who wielded a strong influence upon Swedish Baptist work in the Pacific Northwest, Benson as a historian and Lovegren as a munificent benefactor in the years of his prosperity.

---

[1] Cited in P. Benson, *Begynnelse-Tider av Svenska Baptisternas Verksamhet på Västkusten,* p. 10.

[2] *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* op. cit., 1882, p. 186. Okerson wrote frequent and extensive accounts of his work in this journal.

[3] Lagergren, C. G., *Från Strids-och Arbetsfältet,* pp. 112–113. See also *Betlehem* 1892, and Hall, *Svenska Baptisternas Historia,* Vol. II, pp. 249–250.

When the small meetinghouse could no longer take care of the crowds that came to hear the gospel, and for other reasons as well, it was decided to disband and reorganize the group into two churches, one Swedish and one Norwegian-Danish. Thus it came about that the First Swedish Baptist Church of Seattle was formed April 22, 1889, with forty charter members.[4] The Swedish church purchased a new lot and erected a house of worship which was dedicated December 29, 1889. F. O. Nelson, a nephew of the early pioneer preacher F. O. Nilsson, was called to assume the pastorate. Like his uncle, Nelson was a restless pioneer, and hence did not remain more than two years in Seattle. Both in Washington and Montana as well as in California, he became instrumental in starting Swedish Baptist work.

Seattle experienced an extraordinary rapid growth in population. Each year thousands, many of them Swedish, flocked in from other parts of the country, as well as from Sweden. It goes without saying that the Swedish Baptist church also reaped a rich harvest from that large immigration. For example, when Fredrik Linden assumed leadership of the church May 1, 1903, the membership had reached 196. Six years and eight months later, at the end of 1909, the number of 426 had been attained. Of these 89 had joined by baptism. This would indicate that nearly 150 members had moved in from other places. In all the churches in Washington between 1890 and 1909 there were 680 baptisms, and 1,702 additions by transfer of letters. An important forward step was the erection of the new church building, fourth in order in the history of the church. It was an impressive and commodious sanctuary, with a seating capacity of one thousand, one of the largest in the whole denomination, and was dedicated July 16, 1905.[5] Located on Ninth Avenue and Pine Street, not far from the main business center of the city, it was easily accessible from every part of Seattle.

---

[4] *The Golden Jubilee,* First Swedish Baptist Church, 1889–1939, pp. 3–4. See also P. Benson, *Svenska Baptisternas Historia: Washington och Norra Idaho,* 1911, pp. 9–10. *Nya Wecko-Posten,* July 17, 1889, p. 4.

In many respects the most notable pastorate in the First Swedish Baptist Church of Seattle was that of Emil Friborg. In length of time it has seldom been equalled in the history of Conference Baptists, for it covered almost one third of a century, from 1911 to 1943. In another respect, too, this pastorate was different from most others in the denomination, probably not so much in the content of the message that was preached, as in the specific method of approach and emphasis. That emphasis was primarily on the social aspects and implications of Christianity.[6]

Friborg also became very popular among societies and lodges, especially of a Swedish origin, as a lecturer on social, economic, and cultural subjects. At the twenty-fifth anniversary of his pastorate in the First Swedish Baptist Church not less than eleven lodges and societies joined whole-heartedly in a testimonial of appreciation.[7] It may be questioned, however, if the great popularity which the pastor enjoyed in circles of that kind might not have been a retarding factor in Bible study and prayer and direct soul winning in the church. And his "sympathy for the under privileged," good as that was, may have alienated certain elements within the church.

Ballard Baptist Church

In the early nineties Ballard was a small village of about 600 inhabitants. Among these were several Swedes, and a few members of the Seattle Swedish Baptist church had also settled there. A mission started by that church, though apparently very insignificant to begin with, was destined to bring permanent results. On May 5, 1893[8] a church was formed with eight charter members, all of whom had letters from the First Swedish Church of Seattle.

---

[5] Benson, *Svenska Baptisternas Historia,* op. cit., pp. 13–14, 148. *The Golden Jubilee,* op. cit., pp. 9–10. See also *Nya Wecko-Posten,* June 22, 1909; *Svenska Standaret,* June 10, 1914.

[6] *The Golden Jubilee History,* op. cit., pp. 11–16.

[7] Ibid., p. 15.

[8] Benson, *Svenska Baptisternas Historia,* op. cit., p. 42.

The first few years the small group of immersed believers in Ballard encountered great obstacles. By 1900 the membership was only sixteen. With the coming of O. Ellison, however, in 1906 the members felt much encouraged and were inspired to do greater things for the Lord. When he closed his ministry there in 1912 the membership had reached 60. God's continued blessing rested upon the church so that it could report 152 members by 1923. Then followed several lean years of discouragement in that a large group of the membership withdrew, due to Pentecostalism. The membership, decimated by that exodus, reached a low ebb of 89 in 1929. Moreover, the economic depression made it next to impossible to meet financial obligations. A happy solution to the difficult problem was found in the decision of the Ballard church to become a mission of the mother church for a trial period of five years, and thereby cease to function as an independent organization. The decision, by mutual agreement of the two churches, was carried into effect on January 19, 1930, and the First Church, with Pastor Friborg and his associate Reuben Olson, very generously cared for the Ballard branch. The attempt turned out so well that by 1935 the Ballard friends were again prepared to launch out independently with Reuben Olson as pastor.[9] By 1938 the membership had climbed to 156, and in 1951 to 304, with a Sunday school of 398.

Elim, Seattle

In the first decade of the present century a considerable number of Swedes had located in the northeastern part of Seattle. This group included seventeen families who were members of the First Swedish Baptist Church. Under the leadership of Axel Lindgren, at that time associate pastor of the First Church, a Sunday school was started in December, 1907, in the home of J. Edward Swanson, and gospel services were arranged in the various homes, the first meeting being attended by twelve persons. A chapel was built and dedicated April 12, 1908. Two years later, April 10, 1910, the Elim Swedish Baptist church was organized with 38 charter members, all of whom had letters of transfer from the First Church.[10] In number as well as in other respects it was a good beginning. By the first annual meeting the membership had increased to 48. During Gideon Nylander's charge, 1913–1916, a beautiful house of worship was erected. A steady growth brought the number of members up to 134 in 1925. However, under the ministry of Magnus Johnson, 1919–1925, disturbing elements began to threaten the life of the church. Pentecostal teachings, advocated by the preacher, caused misunderstanding and discord, with the result that 27 members later left the church. However the church not only survived the storm but has in later years experienced a healthy growth, the membership having reached 232 in 1951, with a Sunday school of 301.

---

[9] *Through Fifty Years of Service,* 1893–1943, *Ballard Baptist Church, Washington,* pp. 10–17.

[10] *The Golden Jubilee,* First Swedish Baptist Church, op. cit., p. 10. See also *Nya Wecko-Posten,* May 4, 1915; Minutes of organization of the Elim Baptist Church; and *Thirty-Fifth Anniversary,* Elim Baptist Church, Seattle, Wash., 1945, p. 48.

The Elim Church, like so many other churches, has been blessed with good and consecrated lay leadership. Outstanding in that respect was Elmer Nicholson, M.D. In the Elim Church, which he joined in 1919, he served faithfully and efficiently — as Bible teacher, chairman of the board of trustees and vice chairman of the church — until his unexpected death, January 26, 1950. In the Columbia Conference he took a keen interest, serving on the Conference Board and as treasurer for twenty-two years. The Assembly grounds at Lake Retreat, to which he gave liberally of both time and means, were especially close to his heart. Like Luke, "the beloved physician," Doctor Nicholson loved God and His Word and His people. An open Bible was always found on his desk, and there was rarely a church prayer meeting but that he was in his usual place.[11]

Tacoma

In Tacoma, as in Seattle and Portland, it was Olaus Okerson who broke the ground and started Swedish Baptist work. As stated previously, he reached Seattle in the spring of 1881, and the aggressive missionary began immediately to make preaching tours in the whole surrounding area, including Tacoma. By December 1, 1881, he was able to write to "Evangelisk Tidskrift": "I baptized a Norwegian brother in Tacoma, Washington territory, and hope more will follow. He is a steady and talented man and may become a blessing to others."[12] This Norwegian convert, by name John Anderson, became the firstfruit in the Pacific Northwest and a charter member in the Scandinavian Baptist church organized in Tacoma a little later. Upon a lot donated by the railroad company, Okerson was happy to report in August of 1882, he had erected a small meetinghouse in Tacoma which was dedicated free of debt.[13] It is worthy of mention that this church building, as well as one built by Okerson in Seattle, was the first one ever built by and for any Scandinavian denomination in the two cities.

---

[11] *The Standard*, Feb. 10, 1950.

[12] *Evangelisk Tidskrift*, 1882, p. 6.

N. Hayland, who ministered to the Scandinavian Baptist church in Seattle 1884–1885, was possessed with the same missionary spirit as Okerson and extended his ministry by means of regular visits to Tacoma. On the 29th of March, 1885 it was his privilege to immerse three believers there, including Knut Nelson, the pastor of the Norwegian Free Church. By April 3, 1885, there were enough converts to organize a church, composed of four Norwegians and two Swedes. This church remained a Scandinavian Baptist church until 1893, with Knut Nelson as its first pastor.

Due to some misunderstanding, as well as for other reasons, it was found expedient for the Swedes to withdraw and form a church of their own, which was done January 21, 1893. It was called the Swedish Baptist Church of Tacoma, and, since May 8, 1935, the Central Baptist Church of Tacoma. The day following the organization, seven more members were added to the twenty-five charter members.[14] F. R. Goranson, one of their own group, was elected pastor. This faithful lay preacher filled the pulpit as interim pastor not less than five different times. The membership experienced a rapid increase and rose to 65 by the end of the first year. In the list of early pastors of the Tacoma church there are several of outstanding ability and prominence among Swedish Baptists. A. G. Hall, who served the church, 1893–1896, was the first Swedish Baptist historian and wrote two large volumes on Swedish Baptist History. A. P. Ekman, a great expository preacher and wise spiritual leader, was pastor of the Tacoma church for twelve years, 1905–1917. Previously he had served our Conference church in New York City for sixteen years. The good natured and kind hearted Charles Asplund, pastor in Tacoma 1917–1924, became better known than most Conference preachers on the West Coast, for besides Tacoma, he served other churches in the Columbia Conference, such as Portland, Oregon; Bellingham, Spokane, and Ballard, Washington, some of these twice.

An indication of the great migration to the West Coast is the fact that here as in Seattle, especially in the early years, the church received more than twice as many members by letter as by baptism.

---

[13] Benson, *Svenska Baptisternas Historia i Washington,* p. 18.

[14] *Historik,* Första Svenska Baptist Församlingen, Tacoma, Wash., 1893–1918, pp. 6–7. *Golden Jubilee,* 1893–1943, Central Baptist Church, Tacoma, Wash., p. 2. See also *Nya Wecko-Posten,* February 4, 1913.

At the twenty-fifth anniversary of the church in 1918, it was reported that during those twenty-five years 292 persons, including the charter members, had been received into the fellowship of the congregation by transfer of letters, and 139 had joined by baptism. The total membership in 1918 was 187.[15] In 1951 the number had increased to 411, with a Sunday school enrollment of 665. And in 1950 a new and beautiful sanctuary replaced the old building which was erected in 1900.

Spokane

Practically all of the Conference churches in Washington are located on or near the Coast, west of the Cascade Mountains. Until quite recently the church at Spokane has been alone in eastern Washington. Here, too, it was Olaus Okerson who pioneered; he made his first visit to Spokane in 1888, before any other Swedish Baptist preacher had even been there. Two years later, in the summer of 1890, F. O. Nelson, at that time pastor in Seattle, made a missionary journey to Spokane, which resulted in some conversions and the arrangement to hold regular services on Sunday and Thursday evenings. Two of the brethren with some talents as speakers and leaders were appointed to be in charge of the work. In the spring of 1891 the Norwegian preacher of Tacoma, Knut Nelson, was sent by the Baptist State Convention to prepare the Spokane field for organized work. The Swedes, however, did not respond very readily to the Norwegian minister. But two years later F. R. Goranson, who was traveling as Sunday school missionary in western Washington at that time, succeeded in making more definite preparations for the founding of a church in Spokane. A Swedish Baptist congregation with eight charter members was organized on April 7, 1894.[16] With August Olson as the first pastor, 1895–1898, the membership reached 63 in 1898. A branch Sunday school with a large enrollment was started in another section of the city, and the pastor made journeys to Moscow and Troy, Idaho, where many Swedes were homesteading. In 1902 a church was organized at Troy. A lady missionary by the name of Mathilda Malmberg, who later became Mrs. J. A. Tjernlund of Kulm, North Dakota, and who at that time was in the service of the Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society, also brought much encouragement and help to the early Swedish Baptist work of Spokane.

---

[15] *Tjugofem-Års Historik,* op. cit., pp. 9–10.

[16] *Golden Jubilee History,* Broadway Baptist Church, Spokane, Wash., 1894–1944, p. 1. See also *Fortieth Anniversary Jubilee,* March 27, 1934, and Benson, op. cit., p. 53. And *Historik över Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen i Spokane Tjugofemåriga Verksamhet,* 1894–1919. (MS).

A discouraging factor at some periods in the history of the Spokane church was the fact that many members moved away to seek work elsewhere, especially in the large centers on the West Coast. The membership thus experienced a reduction in the course of a few years, from a high of nearly 200 to a low of 131 in 1919. The Spokane church however, has been fortunate in keeping their pastors on an average somewhat longer than many churches; during the past fifty-five years they have been served by eleven pastors. In 1951, 161 members were reported, and the church had a strong and well organized Sunday school.

Bellingham

Sometime in the eighties Swedes found their way to what was then New Whatcom, or Fort Bellingham. Whether they came by land or water no one knows. At the first quarterly meeting of the recently organized Swedish Baptist Conference of Washington, held at Tacoma in the spring of 1890, the brethren were informed that a considerable number of their countrymen, including a few Baptists, had settled at Bellingham, and it was suggested that something be done to give them the gospel. As a result, August Sandell, the Conference missionary, was asked to survey the Bellingham area with a view to establishing permanent Swedish Baptist work there. The missionary arrived in the month of March, 1890 and gathered the Swedish people for religious services both in the homes and in the American Baptist church. Funds were raised, a lot was purchased, and preparations were made to build a meetinghouse. In the meanwhile more Swedish Baptists had moved in, and one believing couple followed the Lord in baptism June 15, 1890. Now the time seemed ripe for organizing a church. This took place June 19, 1890, with ten charter members, the new church being named the Swedish Baptist Church of New Whatcom.[17] Later, when the city changed its name to Bellingham, the church did likewise.

August Sandell became the first pastor of the little church and served one year. A house of worship was erected and dedicated March 15, 1891, and the membership increased to 22 within a year. As later pastors also did, Sandell shared his time with nearby Delta, where a Swedish Baptist church had been formed in 1886. During the first decade in the history of the Bellingham church the work was discouraging and the progress slow. By 1897 the membership had decreased to 16 souls. It should be stated, however, that in the same year 21 persons received letters of transfer to organize a new church at Ferndale, which, of course, meant the furtherance of the gospel in that area.[18]

---

[17] Benson, op. cit., p. 38. — *Historik, Tjugofem År,* 1890–1915, Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Bellingham, Wash., pp. 3–4. See also *Historik över Svenska Baptisterna i Washington,* 1889–1901 (MS).

A new era in the history of the Bellingham church began with the coming of Charles Asplund as pastor in 1902. In fact, his ministry of nearly eight years, 1902–1910, was, in many respects, the most progressive period in the history of the church. The membership increased from 28 to 178. No doubt much of that increase was due to prosperous times in Bellingham and a great influx of people to the city, for of the addition in membership not less than 144 came by transfer of letters, and 78 by way of baptism. The Sunday school had an enrollment of 148, the young people's society a membership of 72, and the ladies' mission circle 82 members. A new church edifice was erected in 1906 at a cost of $7,500.00 The same year a mission was started in Matsqui, B. C., which later developed into a church. And in 1908 the church sent one of her sons, C. Alfred Carlson, to the Morgan Park Seminary to prepare for the gospel ministry.[19] In later years the church has experienced a steady growth and development, with 249 members in 1951.

OTHER CHURCHES IN WASHINGTON

In 1888, one year before the First Swedish Baptist Church of Seattle was organized, a Swedish Baptist church composed of eleven charter members, was formed in Pearson, located a few miles west across the Sound from Seattle. The limitation of the field, no doubt, and long vacancies between pastorates, retarded numerical growth and development. A revival, however, in the early twenties, when fifteen persons were immersed, brought the membership up near the fifty mark. But a few years later Pentecostalism began to prey upon the little flock, until finally it was decided in September of 1928 to dissolve the church and unite, as a mission, with the First Swedish Baptist Church of Seattle.[20] In 1948 a new church was organized in the old place under the name of the Lemolo Baptist Church.

In 1889 two Danish families of the Baptist faith moved from Seattle and settled at Cedarhome. Later in the same year some Baptists came from northern Sweden, and one family from Tacoma. Seven immersed believers organized a Swedish Baptist church at Cedarhome on February 28, 1890. One of the members, Eric Sjolander, being gifted as a speaker and leader, became the first pastor, and later served a second term, altogether fourteen years. It is interesting to notice that the same membership was reported in 1949 as in 1900, namely, 35.[21] In the twenties, however, the membership reached a high of 74, and, whether many or few, the saints kept the gospel light burning in the community.

---

[18] *Tjugofem Års Historik,* op. cit., pp. 7, 9.

[19] Ibid., pp. 11–14. Benson, op. cit., p. 41.

[20] Benson, op. cit., 32–35. See also Notes by Eric Berg on the Pearson Church.

The first Swedish Baptist to settle in the Skagit Valley was John Morrison who arrived in 1888 and located three miles south of Mt. Vernon. Three years later, several more came from Seattle, Tacoma, and Kansas. O. J. Johnson from Kansas, who had done some preaching in Sweden, began to gather the Swedes for religious services. A visit by O. Okerson in the winter of 1893 resulted in the organization of a church March 19, 1893. This church was named the First Swedish Baptist Church of Skagit City. After moving to a more centrally located place, the name was changed to the Swedish Baptist Church of Mt. Vernon.[22] O. J. Johnson was elected leader and the first pastor of the church, and continued in that capacity for four years; later on he cared for the church a second period of two years. During the pastorate of Andrew Swartz, 1905–1909, a revival added 40 new converts to the church in the spring of 1906. A strange thing, however, about the revival was that about forty per cent of the recruits soon began to waver in their faith and had to be excluded from church fellowship. A house of worship was erected and dedicated July 30, 1905. In 1909 the membership reached 83, and 112 in 1939. The last decade the increase has been considerable, reaching 215 in 1951.

In the economic depression of the nineties, several of the Swedish Baptists in Bellingham moved out to West Ferndale. Thirteen of these formed a church May 23, 1897, with the pastor of the mother church, C. J. Granquist, also preaching in Ferndale for several years.[23] By 1910 the membership had increased to 52, and 93 by 1918. Then followed a decline in membership for some twenty-five years, until finally in 1944 a revival added 21 new converts, bringing the membership to an all time high of 85.

In the month of August, 1892 four Swedish Baptists and two Mission Covenanters went from Seattle to Preston, a short distance east of Seattle. These six men had formed a company for the purpose of manufacturing roof shingles. They were the praying kind of church members who always bring their religion along, no matter where they go. Consequently they met for a prayer meeting their first evening in Preston. August Lofgren was the leader of the group. Indeed, that was the most practical way to start a business venture that was to prove a great success over a number of years. A flourishing Sunday school, in charge of Lofgren, was also started, and preachers from Seattle came out quite frequently to conduct gospel services in Preston. In the meanwhile several Baptist families, both from Tacoma and Seattle, moved out to the thriving sawmill center. On March 6, 1900, twenty immersed believers united themselves together into the Swedish Baptist church of Preston. F. O. Lonn, a lay preacher who also worked at the shingle mill, became the first pastor. The first decade, in particular, the church experienced a rapid growth. A membership of 119 was reported, and two Sunday schools were operating with an enrollment of 148.[24] A gradual decline in membership for several years did not discourage the saints at Preston, and their faith has been rewarded in the fact that souls have been saved and added to the church, reaching a number of 116 members in 1951, almost equalling the high of 119 in 1910.

---

[21] Benson, op. cit., pp. 36–37. And notes by Eric Berg on the Cedarhome Church.

[22] Benson, op. cit., p. 47.

[23] Benson, op. cit., p. 57. See also Notes on the Ferndale Church by Eric Berg.

Two months of gospel services in the city of Everett brought concrete results in the formation of a Swedish Baptist church which was organized August 19, 1901, with sixteen charter members. G. A. Osbrink was called to become the first pastor, dividing his time with Cedarhome. The blessings of God rested signally upon the church so that after two years a membership of 68 could be reported.[25] It is significant that in 1904, when the church was without a pastor for the greater part of the year, an addition of 21 new members was gained. As in so many other churches, there were seasons of refreshing and growth, and also times of adversity and decline. In 1921 a high point of 146 members was reached. Then followed several years of a discouraging retreat until 1936, when the membership had decreased to 48.

At that time, however, there was a turn of the tide. For a merger was effected between the Swedish church and an American Baptist church, adding more than seventy-five members. In 1943 another large addition of members by means of letters of transfer brought the membership up 223.

---

[24] Benson, op. cit., pp. 58–61. See also copy of Minutes of organization and brief notes on the history of the Preston Church (MS). *Nya Wecko-Posten,* March 23, 1915. *Fifty Years,* Preston Baptist Church, 1900–1950, pp. 1–8.

[25] Benson, op. cit., p. 62. See also *Historik,* Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Everett, Wash., 1901–1930 (MS).

In the extreme northern part of Washington there was a place by the name of Dakota Creek where a Scandinavian Baptist church was organized August 21, 1886. Three years later the name Swedish was substituted for Scandinavian, and in 1894 the name of the church was changed to Delta Swedish Baptist Church. After having gained a membership of 58 in 1906, the church gradually declined by reason of the death of several of the pioneers and of others moving away from the community. The last minutes of the church are dated March 24, 1928. Before "finis" was written, however, a daughter church had been formed at Badger July 23, 1903, mostly of members from the Delta church.[26] The name of the new church was later changed from Badger to Sunrise. In 1951 this church had a membership of 143, with a strong and promising Sunday school.

The church at Hoquiam was organized September 18, 1904, with 12 charter members.[27] Martin Carlson, later active in Pentecostal groups, became the first pastor. A period of dissension, which continued for several years, began in 1911, threatening the very existence of the small group. In later years, however, the Hoquiam church has experienced a wholesome development, numbering 81 souls in 1951.

One of the younger churches in Washington, the one at Hartford, founded in 1911, has been unusually progressive. The membership of 21 in 1918 advanced to 84 in 1929, and 197 in 1948, with a Sunday school enrollment of 317. In fact, for the year 1948, only two churches in the whole General Conference reported a higher number of baptisms, Hartford having 31 baptisms that year. The church at Puyallup, also, which was organized September 4, 1920, has an extraordinary opportunity for a great soul-saving work among the children and young people that crowd their church building to capacity every Sunday. Their Sunday school enrollment considerably exceeds the present church membership. In more recent years three other churches with good prospects for future growth have been formed in Washington: Bremerton, organized 1946; Ephrata, 1948; and McMicken Heights, Seattle, 1949.

Three churches located in British Columbia, Canada, also belong to the Columbia Conference, namely, Matsqui, founded in 1910; Vancouver, 1938; and Powell River, 1948. In Montana there are only two Conference churches, the one at Anaconda, organized in 1897, and the other at Great Falls, founded in 1893. Both of these have had a hard struggle for existence, but by God's grace and the faith and work of the believers, they have survived and gained ground, especially in recent years.

---

[26] Minutes of Organization of the Sunrise Church. See also *Svenska Standaret,* Sept. 20, 1916, p. 6.

[27] *History,* Hoquiam Baptist Church (MS).

Portland, Oregon

As stated in Chapter Fifteen, O. Okerson arrived in Portland early in January of 1881. Portland was then a city of about 20,000, with a Swedish population of 300.[28] Among the latter Okerson found four Swedish Baptist families and two unmarried persons who were members of the First American Baptist Church. This church had carried on a Scandinavian mission some years prior to Okerson's arrival.[29]

With the coming of Okerson, however, separate Scandinavian Baptist work began. He bought a house to be used for divine worship. Then he traveled among the Baptist churches of the Middle West and the East and raised some two thousand dollars to pay for the building. In the meanwhile the above mentioned G. Liljeroth, who had spent a few months in Seattle, came to Portland and continued the missionary work started by Okerson. Definite results followed upon the proclamation of the gospel. On October 2, 1883, John Palmblad and two others were immersed by Liljeroth in Johnson Creek at Gresham. Five others took the same step on New Year's Eve, 1883. These eight immersed believers, together with eight others who had letters from other churches, were organized into a Scandinavian Baptist church by Liljeroth January 1, 1884.[30] Liljeroth became the first pastor of the Portland church, but poor health and a restless spirit caused him to seek the warmer climate of California in June of the same year. Okerson then assumed the leadership and served as pastor until October, 1885.

It proved to be a great blessing for the young church to have the saintly N. Hayland as its first permanent pastor for four years, 1885–1889. Under his ministry many souls turned to the Lord and were added to the church. The original modest meetinghouse was replaced in 1887 by a larger building. This, again, was replaced in 1905 by a beautiful structure, and in 1927 the present commodious temple was dedicated. A sewing society, with Mrs. Hayland as the first president, was organized in 1886, and a young people's society in 1888.[31]

---

[28] *Begynnelse-Tider* by Benson, p. 27.

[29] *Minnesskrift,* Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Portland, Ore., 1884–1924, p. 14. *Sixtieth Anniversary,* Temple Baptist Church, Portland, Ore., 1884–1944, p. 7.

[30] *Minnesskrift,* op. cit., pp. 17–18. *Sixtieth Anniversary,* op. cit., pp. 11–14. See also *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Feb. 7, 1894, p. 4. *Svenska Standaret,* Feb. 4, 1919.

John Palmblad, the first to be immersed by Liljeroth in Portland, was a pioneer who proved a blessing to many of the early churches. In the Portland church he served as deacon from the time of the organization of the church until the end of his life in 1922, or for a period of forty-one years. Cheerful and talkative, always interested in missions and all Kingdom work, and withal a sincere friend of preachers, he enjoyed sharing in discussions at conferences and other meetings, where he often made exceedingly original and witty remarks. For example, the problem of missions was discussed and a farmer friend of Palmblad had suggested that the problem could very easily be solved if we only had apostolic preachers who would be willing to serve without salary. Palmblad replied: "If we only had apostolic farmers, money most certainly would come into the mission treasury, for they sold their land and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet."[32]

In the period that Gideon Sjolander served the Portland church, 1916–1924, a problem of divided opinion arose, a problem which created much discussion and no little disturbance in several Conference churches. The question was the individual communion cups. Many Swedish Baptist churches of that period hesitated to introduce the individual cups, since they regarded the practice as contrary to the best interpretation of the New Testament. In Portland the dispute led to a division when, in March, 1919, fifteen members presented a petition asking that they be given their letters to organize a new church.[33] The church, however, felt that they could not conscientiously grant the petition. A new organization was formed, nevertheless, and those who participated were, of course, dropped from the membership of the First Church. The matter might have led to further division in the church if it had not been for the patience and wisdom shown by Pastor Sjolander. The separatist church never grew, or added more members, and after a few years most of the members returned to the bosom of the mother church.

Throughout the years the Portland church has been led by a group of good pastors, gifted in the pulpit as expounders of the Word, and several of them have been outstanding evangelists. Possessing a strategic field and with God's blessings upon the Word, a steady advance has been made until the membership now is near the 400 mark. Worthy of note is the fact that in the roll of pastors in the Portland church there is only one American born man, namely, V. E. Hedberg, who served as interim pastor 1937–1939. At this stage, in 1952, there are very few left in the active pastorate who were born in Sweden.

---

[31] *Sixtieth Anniversary History,* op cit., pp. 17–21. *Minnesskrift,* op. cit., pp. 21, 22.

[32] *Minnesskrift,* op. cit., p. 20.

[33] Ibid., p. 36.

OTHER CHURCHES IN OREGON

Outside of Portland, the state of Oregon has been a rather unproductive field for Swedish Baptists. Probably the main reason for this is the fact that the Swedes have never been very numerous there. Of the several churches organized in past years only three have survived to the present, namely, Warren, Cherry Grove and Clatskanie.

More directly as a result of the work of A. G. Sandblom, who was missionary in Oregon 1907–1912, a church was organized at Warren with seven members, June 5, 1907. For a few years everything looked quite prosperous. Then, in 1913, a Swedish Finnish brother came to Warren and organized a Finnish mission society which seemed very largely to have disrupted the Swedish Baptist church, which became inactive for some seven years. With the coming in 1920 of E. Bjorkquist as missionary to Oregon, a new day dawned for the Warren church. The missionary with his family located at Warren, and on November 19, 1920, the church was reorganized with 15 members.[34] Ten years later the membership reached 42, with a Sunday school of 70. A church membership of 143 was reported in 1951. The writer of the Ten Years History, the kind-hearted and friendly Bjorkquist, gives the community the following tribute: "We acknowledge with much gratitude what our friends in the community have done for us. In many of them we have experienced a marvelously sacrificial participation in our work."[35] What a commendation for the church and the missionary and the community!

August Lovegren, who became largely instrumental in starting Swedish Baptist work at Preston, Washington, had moved to Cherry Grove, Oregon, where he established a lumbering and saw mill industry. Among the people who for that reason were attracted to the rapidly growing community were several Swedish Baptists. These being forty-five in number, organized a church January 28, 1912,[36] and Andrew Johnson became the first pastor. The following two years there was a large migration of Swedish Baptists to Cherry Grove, and the membership of the church reached a high of 119 in 1914, with a Sunday school enrollment of 109. Indeed, the future seemed unusually bright both for the community and the church. However, the good times proved of short duration. A sudden economic depression in the lumber market caused disastrous reverses and distress to the whole community. Naturally the church did not escape a period of tribulation. Many of the members moved away to seek work elsewhere, and misunderstanding and internal dissension threatened the inner peace and harmony among the saints. However, even though the membership was cut in half, the church survived and it has in later years made steady progress.

---

[34] *Minnesskrift,* op. cit., pp. 69, 78. *Ten Years History,* 1920–1930, of the Warren Church (MS). *Nya Wecko-Posten,* June 18, 1907.

[35] *Ten Years History,* op. cit.

[36] *Minnesskrift,* Portland, op. cit., pp. 76–77. See also Minutes of organization of the Cherry Grove Baptist Church.

At Clatskanie a Conference Baptist church was organized in 1943, and another one at St. Johns Woods, Portland, in 1949. Both these groups have good prospects for growth.

CHURCHES IN CALIFORNIA

A decade ago the prospects for continued growth of Swedish Baptist churches in California did not seem exceptionally bright. There were only eight churches left of the fifteen or sixteen that had been organized. The others had been dissolved for one reason or another, or else they had transferred their allegiance to the California State Conventions. True, the remaining eight churches commanded a comparatively large membership, but they lacked a united and aggressive missionary program, partly, no doubt, because of limited opportunities to continue work among Swedish speaking people. In the last six years however, a remarkable change has taken place, and the California Conference has become one of the most progressive groups in the entire General Conference fellowship. The eight churches of 1944 have increased to 21 in 1951 with more in the process of making, and the combined membership has grown from 1,981 in 1944, to 4,055 in 1951.

Oakland

The first Swedes to arrive in California undoubtedly followed the gold rush of 1849. Like others of their kind, they were seeking gold and not the Kingdom of God. As the number of Swedes increased in the San Francisco Bay region, however, there was a relatively good response to the gospel as preached by various men and groups, a

Swedish Methodist church being organized in San Francisco August 20, 1874, and a Lutheran church in 1882.[37]

In the late seventies and early eighties, several Swedish Baptists had settled in the Bay area, but as there was as yet no Swedish Baptist church organized, they affiliated themselves with local American Baptist churches. Bonds of language and nationality, however, caused them frequently to seek spiritual edification within their own group, and a few felt keenly the need of an organized Swedish Baptist church. But they lacked leadership.[38] Then they turned for advice to a minister known to some of them from Sweden, who was none other than Gustaf Liljeroth. At that time he had spent a few months in Portland, Oregon, where, as previously mentioned, he had organized a Swedish Baptist church January 1, 1884. However, since he "suffered dreadfully from rheumatism in Oregon,"[39] he responded immediately to the invitation from the Baptists of California. Liljeroth and his wife arrived in San Francisco June 13, 1884. Upon investigation they located twenty-four Swedish Baptists. Strangely enough, however, when the suggestion of a mission or a church was made, they encountered opposition and doubt both from the American Baptists and the Swedes. Only three persons, two elderly women and one young man, could be mustered to the support of Liljeroth.

Nevertheless, after seven months of hard work on the part of the preacher, assisted by his good and brilliant wife, the efforts were crowned with success; quite a group of Swedish Baptists had become interested in organizing a church. The question then arose as to its location — in San Francisco or Oakland. For the reason that the majority of the prospective members lived in Oakland, as well as for other reasons, Oakland won out. On February 1, 1885, a Scandinavian Baptist church was formed of 14 charter members. At a later date the word "Swedish" in the name of the church was substituted for "Scandinavian."[40] As was to be expected, Gustaf Liljeroth, who had started Swedish Baptist work in California, was chosen the first pastor of the new church, and he served in that capacity until July 5, 1887.

---

[37] *Tjugofem-Års Berättelse,* Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, San Francisco, Calif., 1889–1914, pp. 4–5. *Historisk,* Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Oakland, Calif., 1885–1905, p. 3. *Historical Review* of the Activities of the Swedish Baptists in California, 1884–1939 by P. Benson (MS), p. 1.

[38] P. Benson, *Swedish Baptists in California,* op. cit., p. 1. See also Edwin J. Omark, *A History of the Swedish Baptist Churches in California,* 1944, p. 13. And *En Kort Historik av Svenska Baptisternas i California Verksamhet* by Swan A. Engwall, 1884–1926 (MS) p. 1.

[39] *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* 1884, p. 283.

[40] *Historik,* Oakland, op. cit., pp. 4–7.

Under his leadership the Swedish Baptist congregation of Oakland prospered. A meetinghouse was erected, and the membership more than doubled, reaching 36 at the close of Liljeroth's ministry. And, best of all, the pastor was able to pen the following significant words:

> We are as happy in the work as it is possible to be. I know of no one among us who criticizes or complains, none who is ill-disposed. Indeed, we are a happy people.[41]

While they were in Oakland, Mrs. Liljeroth completed her medical studies and was granted her doctor of medicine degree.[42] Most likely she was the only wife of a Swedish Baptist preacher who has earned that distinction. Relative to the matter, Liljeroth wrote on December 8, 1883, during the time they lived in Portland:

> Mrs. Liljeroth continues her medical studies; and nearly every day she is called to the sick. Naturally she does not accept any pay. Her reward is, by words and good deeds, to lead people to the greatest happiness: peace in God.[43]

With her friendly disposition she won the love and esteem of all classes of people both in San Francisco and Oakland. The German Baptists had just started work in San Francisco when the Liljeroths arrived there in 1884, and Mrs. Liljeroth assisted them in their Sunday school, as well as in acting as interpreter for her husband when he preached to the Germans.[44]

During the time of Liljeroth's successor, C. M. Nelson, 1887–1891, the Oakland church continued its missionary outreach with much success. Again the membership more than doubled, increasing from 36 to 84, and that in spite of the fact that when a church was formed in San Francisco, 1889, thirteen of the fourteen charter members came from the Oakland church. At least two human factors are discernible contributing to that extraordinary expansion of Swedish Baptist work in the Bay area. The first is the great missionary zeal of the pastor and his people, ably assisted by the church missionary, Lina J. Hagstrom. She was a charter member of the church, and after a course of preparation in the Chicago Missionary Training School, she had returned to Oakland to labor as a church missionary over a long period of years. Pastor Nelson made extensive preaching tours within the state, visiting, among other places, San Jose and Kingsburg where, later, Swedish Baptist churches were also organized.[45]

---

[41] *Nya Wecko-Posten,* August 19, 1885.

[42] Engwall, *Svenska Baptisterna i California,* op. cit., p. 2.

[43] *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* 1883, p. 286.

[44] *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* 1884, p. 284.

The second creative factor in the rapid growth and success of the Oakland church in the early years was the great migration of Swedish people to California at that time. Hardly a business meeting was held but that new members were received into the church by transfer of letters. During Nelson's pastorate, 107 members joined the church, of whom 72 came by letter, 30 by immersion, and 5 by statement of experience. In the first twenty years of the history of the Oakland church 378 new members were added to the church by letter, as against 103 by immersion.[46]

A good foundation had been laid by the first two pastors. Others continued to build a superstructure on that foundation. J. Alfred Erikson, 1904–1910, who had no small talents as an evangelist, had the joy of seeing the membership increase in four years from 152 to 241. A new church building was erected at that time, which was replaced by a beautiful edifice in 1926. In 1951 the membership in the Oakland Swedish Baptist Church, changed to "Lakeside Baptist Church" in 1935, was 456.

For a number of years during his sojourn in California, John Alexis Edgren was a member of the Oakland Church, where his wise counsel and loving ministry were much appreciated.

Los Angeles

Los Angeles, undoubtedly, is one of the fastest growing cities in the United States: The population of only 11,183 in 1880 had increased to well over two million by 1950, making Los Angeles the third largest city of North America. When Jonas Stadling of Sweden visited the United States in 1881, he failed to find any Swedes in Los Angeles. Five years later, however, during an extended tour on the West Coast, J. A. Edgren and Nathaniel Schmidt discovered several Swedes and arranged some union services for them. In the spring of 1887 Betsy Anderson held protracted meetings in Los Angeles, and she encouraged the Swedish Baptists, who had then settled there, to organize a church.[47] With the counsel of J. A. Edgren, who at that time was living in Los Angeles trying to regain his health, a church composed of 13 charter members was formed on May 15, 1887.[48]

---

[45] *Historik,* Oakland, op. cit., p. 8. See also *Nya Wecko-Posten,* July 11, 1905. And *Forty-five Years History,* 1885–1930 (MS) p. 3.

[46] *Historik,* pp. 9, 19.

[47] Benson, *Swedish Baptists in California,* op. cit., pp. 1–2. *Minnesblad,* Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Los Angeles, Calif., 1887–1912, p. 5.

After a brief student pastorate of six months by one Peter Anderson from the Swedish Baptist Theological Seminary, August Olson assumed the leadership as the first regular pastor January 1, 1888. An excerpt from the report at the first annual meeting reveals some interesting factors which operated in the pioneer days of the Los Angeles church:

> Seven baptized and a net increase in membership from 13 to 51; also missionary endeavors at San Pedro and Pasadena. Besides the regular services in the church, Pastor Olson conducts union services, which are well attended, as many as 200 having been present at a meeting. Also jail services are being held.[49]

Two conclusions, at least, can readily be drawn from the brief report. First, it is apparent, as in the case of Oakland, that there must have been a considerable addition by means of letters of transfer. By 1889 the Swedish population of Los Angeles was estimated at about 1,500. In fact, the growth of the church has been largely through the influx of Swedish Baptists from the Middle Western and Eastern states.[50] For example, during the first twenty-five years of the history of the Los Angeles church, 106 new members were received through baptism, and 424 by letters.[51]

The second factor in the report, and one that is exceedingly encouraging, is the prominent place given to missionary endeavors, a characteristic which is outstanding in evangelical Christianity of every age and in every land. The Master said, "I must go to the next towns." Fortunately the church and its leadership has preserved throughout the years the warm missionary spirit of the pioneers. The second pastor, N. Hayland, organized a missionary group known as "Vingårdsarbetare" (Vineyard laborers), whose object it was to promote missionary interest among the members. F. O. Nelson became the third pastor, and he served the Los Angeles church at two different periods, 1892–1893, and 1898–1901. Like his namesake and uncle, the Swedish Baptist pioneer F. O. Nilsson, he was a restless pioneer missionary, and his missionary zeal carried him far beyond his immediate field of service. At one time during his first term at Los Angeles, he spent several weeks preaching in Montana, the fruit of which was the subsequent founding of a Swedish Baptist church in Butte.[52] In fact, he pioneered for Christ and the Swedish Baptists on the whole West Coast.

---

[48] *Fifty Years in Retrospect,* 1887–1937, First Swedish Baptist Church, Los Angeles, Calif., p. 7.

[49] Cited by Benson, *Swedish Baptists in California,* p. 2.

[50] *Fifty Years in Retrospect,* op. cit., p. 31.

[51] *Minnesblad,* op. cit., p. 19.

The missionary fire kept on burning in the church. A. W. Backlund, pastor of the church 1893–1897, who spent practically all his life as a preacher in California — Los Angeles, Oakland, and Kingsburg — was given permission when he came to Los Angeles to spend one Sunday a month doing missionary work in southern California. In one of his annual reports to the church the pastor made the following meaningful statement:

> The church has preached the gospel during the past year, outside of Los Angeles, in the following fields: San Pedro, Pasadena, Chino, Redlands, and Burma and Assam — In Burma the church has been preaching the gospel through individual brethren who have supported a missionary the whole year. And in Assam the Young People's Society supports a missionary. Moreover, contributions have been given to other missionary projects, both home and foreign.[53]

With good leadership the church continued to make progress in many respects. At the twenty-fifth anniversary in 1912 the membership had reached 262. In 1916 the total membership was 333, and in 1926 it had reached a high of 450. Houses of worship were erected in 1892, in 1907, and in 1949. The two longest pastorates were those of John Friborg, 1905–1913, and Edwin J. Omark, who ministered to the church 1930–1943.

One of the trying experiences in the Los Angeles church was the inroad of Pentecostalism made in 1906. That movement, commonly known in the early days as the "tongues movement" because of its insistence that speaking in tongues was the only sure sign of having received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, started in its modern form in Los Angeles in 1906. The work of the movement was usually divisive in its results, since the recruits were mostly made from other churches and denominations that were accused of being worldly and unspiritual. More than a score of members were lost to the church by reason of that controversy, and the progress of the missionary work was retarded for a season.[54]

San Francisco

It is of interest to know that Captain G. W. Schroeder, who generally is considered to be the first Swedish Baptist and who was immersed in New York in 1844, three years before F. O. Nilsson became a Baptist, lived in San Francisco for some time in the early eighties. His interest in the advance of missions led him to advertise in "The Watchman," a Baptist paper published in Boston, for a preacher who could live without a salary and take up work in a new district of San Francisco. While he was waiting for a response, he organized the Hamilton Square Baptist Church with seven charter members, February 7, 1881. Joseph Bromley later responded to Schroeder's advertisment and became the first pastor of the church.[55] It seems strange that Schroeder apparently did not try to rally the Swedes in San Francisco to religious services, nor ever took any active part in Swedish Baptist work in America.

---

[52] *Fifty Years in Retrospect,* op. cit., p. 10.

[53] *Minnesblad,* op. cit., pp. 9, 14.

[54] *Minnesblad,* op. cit., p. 13.

As previously recorded, Liljeroth, the first Swedish Baptist preacher to proclaim the gospel in California, arrived in San Francisco in the summer of 1884. The first service was held on the evening of June 13, the day of Liljeroth's arrival, in the home of Rina Olson in response to whose invitation the Swedish Baptist preacher had come to California. Since several Swedes were members of the First American Baptist Church, services were held there for some time. However, for reasons stated above, circumstances at that time favored Oakland rather than San Francisco as the starting point for organized Swedish Baptist work. But when C. M. Nelson in the fall of 1887 became pastor of the Oakland church, the mission in San Francisco was revived with the result that on February 15, 1889[56] a Swedish Baptist church was formed there with 14 charter members.

Some time before, the pastor of the First American Baptist Church had vigorously opposed independent Swedish work, and told the Swedes who were members of his church, "It's very foolish of you to go out of our church; we do not believe in a race church."[57] Notwithstanding, the Swedish Baptists, with Pastor C. M. Nelson of Oakland as their spokesman, succeeded in persuading their American Baptist brethren of the advisability of organizing a Swedish Baptist church in San Francisco.

August Olson of Los Angeles accepted a call to become the first pastor of the church. At the termination of his charge in December, 1892, the membership had increased to 71. The greatest increase, as in other centers on the West Coast, was by Swedish Baptists who moved in from other areas of the country. Thus, during the first ten years in the history of the San Francisco church, there were 53 accessions to the membership by immersion as against 160 by letter.

---

[55] *Tjugofem-Års Berättelse,* Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, San Francisco, Calif., 1889–1914, pp. 5–6. See also *Kort Historik,* 1889–1899, Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, San Francisco, Calif., p. 6. And *Fortieth Anniversary History,* 1889–1929, p. 4.

[56] Ibid., p. 7

[57] *25–Årsberättelse,* op. cit., p. 7.

During the four years, 1897–1901, of Charles Palm's ministry, the church made marked progress in several respects. The first house of worship was erected, and it was an impressive sanctuary indeed, with a seating capacity of 500 in the main auditorium.[58] That was truly a venture of faith by a congregation whose membership did not greatly exceed one hundred. For the size of the congregation, according to Pastor Palm, it was believed to have been the largest church building in the Swedish Baptist denomination. Sunday school work and youth activities also experienced a decided boost under Palm's wise and effective leadership. Possessed with a very optimistic, kind and tactful personality, Charles Palm proved to be one of the best young people's workers Swedish Baptists ever had. The Sunday school attendance increased rapidly under his leadership, and two mission Sunday schools were sponsored by the church. A junior young people's society, probably the second one in order of its kind in the whole denomination, was also organized, composed of a group of boys and girls who had recently been won to Christ. Pastor Palm was the counsellor and teacher.

The church membership rose to a high of 168 at the end of Palm's term of service in 1901,[59] a number that was not equalled until 1921. It should be borne in mind, too, that, according to the author of the Tenth Anniversary History of the San Francisco Church, San Francisco is considered to be the most difficult mission field in America, and that it requires three times as much effort to win the same results as in other parts of the country.[60]

Great trials also beset the San Francisco church. One of them is, in a sense, unique in the history of Swedish Baptists, namely, the great earthquake and fire April 18, 1906. This holocaust, which laid in ruins a great part of the city, destroyed completely the Swedish Baptist house of worship. Fortunately, no member of the church family lost his life. Pastor P. A. Hjelm, who served the church 1901–1906, had planned to leave in the middle of the year. However, the good pastor did not have the heart to forsake his flock in the hour of desperate need. He stayed till the end of the year and visited a number of other cities to raise funds for another church building in San Francisco. A generous response on the part of fellow believers brought in the considerable sum of between five and six thousand dollars. The members of the church rallied to the support of their pastor, and high hopes prevailed of the possibility of dedicating the new sanctuary free of debt. This was not to be, however! A new calamity befell the already severely tested saints in San Francisco. Through the failure of the California Safe Deposit Company, the church lost nearly five thousand dollars, which was at that time a staggering loss indeed.[61] In spite of all such reverses, however, the people had faith in God, and worked and sacrificed all the more. The new sanctuary was dedicated for divine worship with much rejoicing on May 17, 1908.

---

[58] *Kort Historik,* op. cit., pp. 14–16.
[59] *25–Årsberättelse,* op. cit., p. 30,
[60] *Kort Historik,* op. cit., p. 19.

But a greater trial, apparently, then the earthquake was in the offing. In 1908 and 1909 the church became involved in divisive controversies centering largely around the temporary pastor, John P. Rosquist. The question arose whether he should serve only as interim or be elected as permanent pastor. The upshot of that sad affair was that some thirty members withdrew with Pastor Rosquist, and formed a new organization called the Salem Baptist Church. All in all the First Church lost about seventy-five members by reason of the controversy. Eleven years later, in 1920, the Salem Church disbanded, due to disruptive influences of the "tongues movement," and many of its members returned to the mother church.[62]

The power of survival, operating in the church of God throughout the ages, sustained, under God, the Swedish Baptist Church of San Francisco. At present it comprises a comparatively strong membership, and has bright prospects for the future. The membership was 291 in 1951.

San Jose

San Jose is located 40 miles south of Oakland in the heart of Santa Clara Valley. In 1892 it had an estimated Swedish population of 500. As previously recorded, Pastor C. M. Nelson of Oakland, actively supported by several of his members, made frequent preaching tours to San Jose. As a result a few were converted and immersed. On August 16, 1892, a Swedish Baptist church was formed with five charter members. Various circumstances however, made the work from the start very discouraging. On February 13, 1895, the church formally disbanded.[63]

[61] Omark, *History of the Swedish Baptist Churches in California,* pp. 26–27.

[62] Ibid, pp. 27–28; 87–90. See also 25-*Årsberättelse,* op. cit., pp. 15–16.

[63] Omark, op. cit., pp. 35–36. Benson, *Swedish Baptists in California,* p. 3.

At Christmas, 1897, A. B. Orgren of San Diego made a visit to San Jose in order to investigate the possibility of reviving the Swedish Baptist work. The following February he located there, and, in pioneer fashion, rented a hall at his own expense and started gospel meetings. The response was comparatively good, with the result that a new Swedish Baptist church was formed October 9, 1898, with 14 charter members. A. B. Orgren was invited to become the regular pastor and served in that capacity until 1901.[64] For several reasons, the chief one probably being its unfortunate location across the street from the large First Baptist Church, the Swedish church did not become large in membership. Of late, however, in a new locality and with a new house of worship considerable progress has been made. In 1951 the membership had reached 196, with a Sunday school enrollment of 269.

San Diego

The first attempt to establish Swedish Baptist work in San Diego was made by Peter Anderson, student pastor of the Los Angeles church. He moved to San Diego and started a mission there in 1888. It was of short duration, however, for when Anderson left after a few months, the mission closed.[65] A. B. Orgren, at that time living in Chino, called San Diego "the neglected field," and said he felt called of God to take up the work there, arriving in the fall of 1891.

August Bernhard Orgren was a member of the second graduating class of Edgren's Theological Seminary. He became the first pastor of the Second (Grace) Baptist Church of Chicago in 1874. His next charge was the First Swedish Baptist Church (Bethlehem) of Minneapolis, which he served 1875–1878. For some time following he traveled as missionary in Minnesota, after which he preached in Princeton and Rock Island, Illinois. The years 1884–1886 he was associated with Edgren as financial secretary of the seminary, when it was located at St. Paul, and later at Stromsburg, Nebraska. For a while he also taught music at the Seminary. From 1887 until his death he sojourned in California — Chino, San Diego, San Jose and Berkeley — where he died September 12, 1903. Orgren was of an aggressive missionary type, and a musician of no mean ability, having studied music at the Royal Academy of Music in Stockholm, Sweden.

Upon his coming to San Diego he went to work and had a meetinghouse erected even before there was an organized congregation.

---

[64] Omark, op. cit., pp. 33–34. *Nya Wecko-Posten,* November 4, 1913.

[65] Benson, op. cit., p. 3.

The building was completed for dedication in October, 1892, an occasion which was planned to coincide with the forming of a church. It was organized October 18, with 15 charter members. Orgren became the first pastor and continued in that service until he moved to San Jose in 1897. At the close of 1896 the church reported 41 members. About that time, however, there began a sad downward trend, with a reduction in membership from year to year. Finally the church became too feeble to maintain itself, and action to disband was taken. The Board of Trustees, meeting February 24, 1905, decided to sell the property to the First Baptist Church of San Diego.[66] For some time thereafter the remaining few members held no religious service.

Fortunately, however, it was possible to revive the smoldering embers. In 1906 John Friborg of Los Angeles visited San Diego and encouraged the dispirited Swedish Baptists to resume the work. F. O. Nelson, the state missionary, held meetings in San Diego the following year, and, through his efforts, the church was reorganized September 16, 1907, under its old name, the Bethel Baptist Church of San Diego. New names were soon added to the roll and the work looked hopeful again. C. M. Nelson became the first pastor of the revived church, and a new house of worship was built and dedicated in May, 1909.

From that time on and for the next thirty years the San Diego church experienced a consistent although slow progress. Undoubtedly a good foundation was laid by faithful pastors and people. The last decade has witnessed a remarkable growth in membership, an increase from 79 in 1940 to 578 in 1951, with a Sunday school enrollment of 608. The fact that a new sanctuary was built in 1940 in a more favorable field, together with progressive leadership and sacrificial work by pastor and people, no doubt accounts largely for the outstanding achievement. The church is now known as College Avenue Baptist Church.

Kingsburg

Kingsburg, located some 230 miles south of San Francisco in the San Joaquin Valley, is the oldest Swedish colony in California. The first Swede to settle there was F. D. Rosendahl, who arrived in 1885 and who was really the founder of the colony. The following year several other Swedes came from Ishpeming, Michigan, where they had been working in the mines. In their new homes in this rich California valley, those settlers soon became prosperous fruit growers, and increased by influx from other parts of the country until the estimated number of Swedes reached 2,000 by 1917.[67]

---

[66] Omark, op. cit., p. 71. See also Engwall, *Svenska Baptisterna i California,* p. 18.

As previously related, C. M. Nelson, after coming to Oakland, made several missionary visits to Kingsburg, the first one being in the spring of 1888 when he stayed two weeks. In the years 1890–1891 the visits were repeated, and in 1892 Nelson spent two months in Kingsburg and the surrounding area. L. J. Ahlstrom, who was the first general missionary in California, 1890–1891, spent some six months in Kingsburg preaching the gospel, though apparently without much success. Several years passed. Then A. W. Backlund, another Oakland pastor, made his first visit to Kingsburg in March, 1900, and continued for some time to spend one week of each month there. Finally the number of immersed believers had increased sufficiently to warrant the organization of a church, which took place May 19, 1901, with 13 charter members.[68] J. P. Rosquist, became the first pastor and served for eighteen months, and as interim pastor on later occasions.

The name of A. W. Backlund, as previously recorded, is intimately connected with Swedish Baptist work in California. In 1892 he came there from Seattle in order to regain his health, and from that time on he labored zealously in the same state until his death at Kingsburg August 11, 1917. As few others, Backlund was burning with a passion to preach the gospel in the next towns and in unevangelized settlements and areas all over California, wherever Swedes could be found. Immediately upon his arrival in Kingsburg April 1, 1904, to assume the leadership of the church, at the very first business meeting he urged the church to begin missionary work in Turlock. Time and again during his term of service in Kingsburg, thirteen and one half years, the church minutes record "that the pastor could visit the smaller and neglected communities, the church paying his traveling expenses."[69] Most certainly such generosity on the part of the Kingsburg church was bound to bring rich returns to the local field. No wonder that under Backlund's energetic and spiritual leadership the membership of the church grew steadily, increasing from about twenty at his arrival to three hundred twenty members at his decease. In his frail body, so frail that the good pastor often had to sit down and rest on his way from his home to the church, there dwelt a big and friendly soul, always willing to counsel and help people in both physical and spiritual needs.[70]

---

[67] Skarstedt, *Svensk-Amerikanska Folket,* pp. 69–70.

[68] *Historik,* Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Kingsburg, Calif. 1901–1926, pp. 7–9. See also Benson, *Swedish Baptists in California,* pp. 4–5.

[69] *Historik,* op. cit., p. 17.

The first three years of Carl Vingren's charge in Kingsburg, 1918–1924, were palmy days in the history of the church. The times were good economically, and a steady stream of people moved in from other parts of the country. Best of all, the talented pastor had the privilege to preach, in his enthusiastic way, to large and receptive crowds. Many conversions took place, and the membership, both by immersion of new converts and by transfer of letters, reached a high of 455 in the spring of 1922[71] In the midst of those prosperous years a new sanctuary, being the third house of worship in the history of the church, was also constructed. It was an impressive building, erected at an estimated cost of $85,000.00 and with a seating capacity, including a sideroom, of about 1,000. The building was dedicated the 30th day of January, 1921. Love and harmony prevailed, and the services were well attended.

However, the golden age was not to be permanent. Seeds of discord were sown in the church through the Pentecostal Movement, with the result that approximately fifty members withdrew to seek nourishment, as they thought, in greener pastures. Other trials, too, befell the Baptists at Kingsburg. Hard times and economic reverses caused many members to move away to other places, and those who remained found it difficult to redeem their pledges to the building fund.[72] But God honored the faith and sacrifice of His people, and the Kingsburg church under new leadership has continued to build on the solid foundation laid by the pioneers. The membership in 1951 was 381.

Turlock

The city of Turlock is located in the northern part of San Joaquin Valley, about one hundred miles southeast of Oakland. It was originally a Swedish colony, founded in 1902 by N. O. Hultberg, who had spent some years as a missionary in Alaska in the service of the Swedish Covenant Church. In Alaska he had also tried his hand at gold digging. His promotional activity for the California colony — it is claimed that he spent about $70,000 for that purpose — lured many Swedes from the rigorous Eastern climate to the place that by means of successful irrigation had been transformed from a valley of dry sand to a fruitful paradise of eternal summer.[73] The colony was orginally intended for Mission Covenant folk, but persons of other fellowship, too, soon moved in.

---

[70] Ibid., pp. 14–17.

[71] Ibid., p. 20.

[72] Ibid., pp. 20–25.

The first Swedish Baptists came in December, 1902. Others followed in due time, and those immersed believers sought the fellowship of each other for prayer and the study of the Word. Pastors of the area, particularly A. W. Backlund, also visited Turlock and held gospel services. In 1907 F. O. Nelson, at that time missionary in California, moved to Turlock, and he and his active wife and children undoubtedly contributed much to the Baptist cause of the community.[74] It was in the Nelson home that the Turlock Swedish Baptist church was organized March 22, 1908, with 19 charter members. The F. O. Nelson home also served as the regular meeting place for the church until a house of worship was built the following year. Money was scarce, but "where there is a will there is a way." The women's society voted to donate toward the purchase of an organ the proceeds from eggs laid by their hens on Sundays for six months. Thus, to quote Pastor Sjolander: "So, thanks to these feathered, noisy servants, this much needed instrument was obtained for the noble ministry of music."[75]

Having benefitted by the ministry of F. O. Nelson for about two years, and that of Paul Johnson as interim pastor a few months, the Turlock church welcomed A. B. Colvin as its first regular pastor in November, 1912. At the fifth anniversary of the church the membership had risen to 42. During Axel Wall's pastorate in 1915 the church was disturbed by "the tongues movement," which, of course, was not surprising since the pastor himself was largely affected by that faith. Under the wise leadership of E. S. Lindblad, who ministered to the church 1916–1922, great progress was made both in numbers and in the inner life of the church. The membership attained a high of 163 in 1922. Since that time younger pastors have labored valiantly for the Lord. The membership had increased to 200 in 1951.

Pasadena

The first efforts to carry on preaching services among Swedish Baptists in Pasadena were made in 1907 while John Friborg was pastor in Los Angeles. When V. E. Hedberg later became pastor of the Los Angeles Church, monthly meetings were arranged in Pasadena. State missionaries A. B. Colvin and C. J. Almquist also devoted some of their time to the Pasadena field, and in the years 1919 and 1920 the work was carried on quite actively by J. P. Rosquist. Finally, a church was organized November 28, 1920, with fifteen charter members.[76] J. A. Carlson came from San Diego to become its first pastor, serving 1921–1926. The Pasadena church has experienced, throughout the years, a healthy, even if not a rapid growth, reporting 142 members in 1951, with a Sunday school enrollment of 170.

---

[73] Skarstedt, *Svensk-Amerikanska Folket,* pp. 71–72. See also Omark, op. cit., p. 45.

[74] Benson, *Swedish Baptists in California,* p. 6.

[75] Cited by Omark, *Swedish Baptist Churches of California,* p. 48

Several new churches have been organized the last years in the fast growing communities of California.

---

[76] *Ten Years History* (MS) of the Swedish Baptist Church of Pasadena. See also Engwall, op. cit., pp. 22–23, and Omark, op. cit., pp. 77–81.

PART THREE

INSTITUTIONAL WORK AND MISSIONARY ACHIEVEMENTS

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

In part one of this book the pioneer churches, preachers, and conferences have been treated in some detail in order to make it possible for the reader to appreciate, at least in part, the faith and life, and the labor and sacrifice that entered into the laying of the foundation upon which Conference Baptists, guided by the Word and the Spirit, are building today. In Part Two the story of the churches from 1871, and more particularly the older churches, is related. To give a complete account of each local church, some three hundred sixty in number, naturally does not lie within the scope of the present work. The aim, however, has been to trace somewhat fully the origin of Swedish Baptist work in the various centers of Swedish population, and how missionary activities on the part of the older churches has borne a rich fruitage in the forming of younger churches in the surrounding districts. It is the author's opinion that in a history of this kind the place of the local churches should be as prominent as possible. For, to be sure, any united project of whatever type, such as home and foreign missions, depends entirely for its success upon the local churches. However, the story would not be complete without Part Three in which there will be a brief record of the united efforts of the churches to "make disciples of all nations," by means of such organized agencies as The General Conference, State Conferences, educational activities, literary efforts, women's, men's, and youth work, charitable institutions, etc. Since the General Conference is basic and, in a sense, inclusive of all other cooperative efforts of Swedish Baptists, it seems logical to begin with that organization.

ORIGIN OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

In Chapter Nine an account was given of "Early Conferences," and primarily the first conference, which held its initial meeting in Rock Island, Illinois, in June, 1856. It was in reality a General Conference, or a Tri-State Conference, since it was composed of delegates from the seven Swedish Baptist churches in existence at that time, located in Illinois, Iowa, and Minnesota. As a general conference, however, its life-span did not extend beyond a few years; it soon divided up into state and district conferences. The fundamental reason for that, no doubt, lay in the immense distances — and immense, indeed, they were to the pioneers of one hundred years ago — and the lack of facilities of travel, which made the idea of one conference for the whole country practically prohibitive. And thus it came about that several years elapsed before the conception of a general conference was again revived.

Olof Lindh stated that he and John Ongman sometime in the middle seventies discussed the advisability of creating a conference that would include all the churches. However, since at that time there existed only three state conferences, namely, Minnesota, Illinois, and Iowa, the matter was dropped for the time being.[1] But the feeling of solidarity and interdependence, in spite of the Baptist emphasis on the independence of the local church, soon re-asserted itself. Consequently it could not have come as a surprise when the following announcement appeared in "Evangelisk Tidskrift" in the early summer of 1879:

> *General Conference* (General-konferens). In Village Creek, Allamakee County, Iowa, there will be held a conference, beginning on the 12th of the coming month of June. To this conference are invited delegates of all our churches in America. Important questions relative to all of our mission work will be considered; problems of doctrine will be discussed, and spiritual edification will be sought.[2]

The eventful day finally arrived. June 12, 1879, was the first day of an epochal meeting, and the place was the historic and beautiful Village Creek, the "Switzerland of Iowa." In fact, it was the annual meeting of the Illinois-Iowa Conference, organized in 1864 (See Ch. Nine), which was held that year in Village Creek, June 12–14. It had previously been agreed that one, or more sessions, of that meeting would be devoted to the task of organizing a General Conference. A. P. Ekman, in his fifteenth anniversary address to the General Conference, eloquently reminisced:

> On the thirteenth (June) the people began to assemble before nine o'clock. The day had adorned itself in one of the most gorgeous of the three hundred sixty-five garments of the year. After a season of devotions and some business, it was decided to adjourn until the next day in order in the meanwhile to organize this conference (the General Conference).[3]

---

[1] Lindh, *Minnen,* op. cit., p. 139.

[2] *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* 1879, p. 158.

[3] A. P. Ekman, Allmänna Konferensen nu och för femton år sedan, *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Sept. 26, 1894.

The exact date, therefore, of the first meeting of the General Conference was June 13–14, 1879. Although an invitation had been extended to all the churches in the whole country, it may be termed strange that so few responded. For apart from the Illinois-Iowa group, who had come to attend their own conference, there were only six delegates, five from Minnesota and one from Wisconsin. The total number of delegates was twenty, distributed as follows: fourteen from the Illinois-Eastern Iowa Conference, representing eight churches with 604 members; five from Minnesota, representing thirty-three churches with 1,449 members; and one from Wisconsin, representing three churches with 75 members. Of the twenty delegates there were two Danes, and during the first three years of its history the Conference was commonly known as the Scandinavian Conference.[4]

John Ongman, at that time pastor of the First Swedish Baptist Church of Chicago, was elected moderator of the Conference. A. P. Ekman, pastor of the Grove City, Minnesota, church, was chosen secretary. Three main items of business received prayerful consideration. First, a school board, composed of nine members, was elected, whose duties would be to promote Edgren's Theological Seminary in cooperation with the board of the American Baptist Union Theological Seminary, of which school Edgren's Seminary was a part. The most pressing need, of course, was the raising of funds to support the teacher, or teachers. However, for reasons stated in Chapter Ten, the school committee largely failed in trying to arouse the churches to an active interest. The second matter of business concerned the denominational literature. It was resolved to make it an aim to rally every Scandinavian Baptist to the support of "Evangelisk Tidskrift" and "Oliebladt." The latter was the organ of the Danish-Norwegian Baptists. Concerning the third question of business there ensued a lively discussion, and a great interest was manifested, and very naturally so, for the matter had to do with missions, primarily the importance of preaching the gospel in states or territories where no Swedish Baptist work had been established. The decision was made to approach the American Baptist Home Mission Society, seeking support for missionaries in new fields.[5]

Moreover, it was agreed that the officers who had served during the Conference would constitute a program committee for the second annual meeting. However, no executive board was elected, nor were any constitution or by-laws drawn up. For that reason Olof Lindh contends that the General Conference, in reality, was not organized until the next meeting, which was held at Moline in 1880, when a constitution was adopted and an executive board elected.[6] Undoubtedly Lindh has a point there.

---

[4] *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* 1879, p. 220. See also *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Sept. 26, 1894.

[5] *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* 1879, pp. 221–222.

As already indicated, many Swedish Baptists regarded the whole project of a General Conference, a conference for the entire country, more or less skeptically. For one thing, it would be too costly to send delegates to the annual meetings over such large distances. Presumably for that reason, both the Western Iowa-Nebraska conference with its fifteen churches and 590 members, and the Dakota conference with five churches and 219 members, failed to send any delegates to the Village Creek meeting. Certainly the path which the General Conference had to travel was not one of "flowery beds of ease." It was a struggle with human inertia in the churches which was destined to continue for many decades. And yet, the Swedish Baptist fellowship in 1879 was fairly impressive in size, with about 65 churches and a combined membership of approximately 3,000 souls.[7]

Since the organization of the General Conference was not completed until at the second meeting, held at Moline, Illinois, October 14–16, 1880, that meeting, too, logically may be considered a part of "the origin of the General Conference." Only sixteen delegates, four less than at the original Village Creek meeting the previous year, representing thirteen churches in four different states, attended the meeting at Moline. However, two churches, namely Oakland, Nebraska, and Big Springs, South Dakota, were represented by written reports. John Ongman was re-elected moderator, and editor Eric Wingren of Chicago was chosen secretary. Two important decisions were recorded: the completion of the organization and the calling of a missionary. The completion of the organization implied, in the first place, the adoption of a constitution, based largely upon the major principles which were enunciated at the Village Creek meeting the previous year. And, second, it involved the election of a Conference Board, composed of nine members, six of whom were to serve in an advisory capacity, and three as the executive committee. John Ongman, Eric Wingren, and August Olson, all of Chicago, were elected members of that committee for the ensuing year.[8] Then, from a legal point of view, it could be recorded that the General Conference was properly organized for work. The second significant decision made at the Moline Conference of 1880 was the election of a missionary. To quote the minutes:

---

[6] *Minnen,* op. cit., p. 140.

[7] Ekman, *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Sept. 26, 1894.

[8] *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* 1880, pp. 342–345.

> The decision to send out a missionary to work new fields was unquestionably the most momentous transaction of the conference.. This is also a rather bold venture since it is connected with great expenses to travel over such a large area. It has been made possible however, by the fact that the American Baptist Home Mission Society has promised to give half of the support toward a missionary. We hope that the churches out of generous hearts will provide the other half.[9]

The man who was chosen to become the first missionary of the General Conference was Christopher Silene. His salary was set at $800.00, with the understanding that he pay his own traveling expenses. Indeed, it seemed to be a tremendous undertaking for the General Conference in the days of its infancy to raise four hundred dollars toward the salary of a missionary!

CHRISTOPHER SILENE

The first missionary of the General Conference was born at Hassela, in the province of Hälsingland, Sweden, February 11, 1850. He had the privilege of growing up in a God-fearing home, which, no doubt, accounts for his turning to Christ as his Savior at the early age of fourteen. Finding it difficult to make a living in Sweden, especially in the years of famine in the middle sixties, Silene, together with many others, emigrated to America, and located in Anoka, Minnesota, in the year 1867, and later in Minneapolis.

A Baptist preacher by the name of Olof Bergstrom, from the same province in Sweden as Silene, came to Minneapolis in the spring of 1871. He contacted young Silene and encouraged him to enter full time gospel service, to which Silene replied that since he had no education for such a calling it would be out of the question. It was Providential that at that very time, in the spring of 1871, J. A. Edgren, pastor of the First Swedish Baptist Church of Chicago, had announced in his paper "Zions Wäktare" that he proposed to open, in the coming fall, a training school for ministers in Chicago. Bergstrom called the young man's attention to that announcement with the result that a correspondence was started between Silene and Edgren. In the meanwhile Silene, together with two friends from Minneapolis, A. H. Nelson and August Malmsten, went south to work in a sawmill in order to gather sufficient funds for his education. Misfortune, however, befell the prospective student, and a siege of sickness depleted all his savings. Hence he was compelled to write Edgren that it was impossible for him to begin his schooling. But the reassuring message from the kind-hearted Edgren, "Come, brother, God will provide,"[10] became the clarion call to young Silene to enter upon a long and useful life in the Master's service.

---

[9] Ibid., p. 345.

Having received from his friends, A. H. Nelson and August Malmsten, enough money for the ticket, Silene made his way to Chicago sick and otherwise penniless. That was the first week of October 1871, when the disastrous fire reduced a great deal of Chicago's north side to ashes. During the fall quarter Silene was the only student in Edgren's seminary. Since he made rapid progress in his studies, he was invited in his senior year to assist his teacher in teaching as well as in literary work. He graduated with honors in 1875.

After shorter pastorates in the Second Church, Chicago, and Altona, Galesburg, and Princeton, Illinois, Silene commenced his work as the first missionary of the General Conference in December, 1880.[11] His field comprised more particularly the Middle West, without any specific limitations. At the third annual meeting of the General Conference, held at Council Bluffs, Iowa, September 15–17, 1881, Silene gave an encouraging report of his missionary labors in seven different states. His efforts had been crowned with divine blessings, resulting in the conversion of many souls, in consolidating and strengthening the work in the churches, and in sending new laborers into the great harvest fields.[12] In Kiron, Iowa, he had found the church torn asunder with strife, leading to an exodus of more than half of the membership, with only 36 members left in the congregation. However, before the good missionary had departed, after a few weeks of prayer and labor, he could report that order and peace had been restored and the membership brought up to 75.[13] However, incessant travel and hard work soon undermined Silene's health to the extent that he was forced to terminate his missionary labors in the spring of 1882, and return to the pastorate. A. P. Ekman, at that time, pastor in Grove City, Minnesota, succeeded him as general missionary.

From 1882 until his death, under rather tragic circumstances, in Arco, Idaho, May 23, 1919, Silene faithfully preached the gospel as pastor at Rockford, Illinois; Topeka, Kansas; Kansas City, Kansas; Duluth, Minnesota; Big Springs, South Dakota; Preston, Washington, and Firth, Idaho; also as missionary in Texas, 1900–1905. The first student of the Theological Seminary and the first missionary of the General Conference was indeed a credit to his alma mater as well as to the people he had faithfully and loyally served. Versatile more than the average, he was a good student and writer, even composing some excellent hymns, a powerful and clear preacher of the Word, and, above all, a genuine Christian.[14]

---

[10] E. Schmidt, *Svenska Baptisternas i Amerika Teologiska Seminarium,* 1871–1921, pp. 14–15.

[11] *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* 1880, p. 376. See also *Årsbok,* Svenska Baptistförsamlingarna i America 1918–19, p. 92. *Nya Wecko-Posten,* June 3, 1919.

[12] *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* 1881, p. 189.

[13] Ibid., pp. 44–45.

A. P. EKMAN

Ekman, who succeeded Silene as general missionary, was born at Skuttunge in the province of Uppland, Sweden, December 9, 1853. At the age of sixteen he experienced the new life in Christ, and two years later, in 1871, he emigrated to the United States, locating in New York City. On May 18, 1873, Ekman was immersed in the Mariners' Temple, the church where G. W. Schroeder, the first Swedish Baptist, received immersion in 1844, and, in like manner, J. A. Edgren in 1858. After a year and a half in New York he moved to Boston, where, as a member of the Baptist Tremont Temple, he became actively engaged in missionary work among the Swedes.[15]

In the fall of 1875 Ekman matriculated in Edgren's Theological Seminary, graduating 1878. Being a brilliant and thorough student, he also, in his senior year, served as teacher in the Seminary. After three years of successful ministry as pastor of the Baptist church at Grove City, Minnesota, Ekman began on November 1, 1882, an extraordinarily fruitful service as General Conference missionary. Through the good offices of General Sheridan, he secured a free pass on all the main railroads west of Chicago, and on some of the roads east of Chicago as well. This greatly facilitated his travel, and reduced the expenses considerably. In his two years of missionary service he traveled about 42,000 miles, from the east coast to the Rocky Mountains, opening up new fields for Baptist work, organizing a number of churches and six state or district conferences. In the case of each conference he arranged cooperation with the respective American Baptist State Conventions. Being a man of peace, a wise leader and organizer, and of a patient and friendly disposition, Ekman was often asked to settle disputes and differences in the churches. In this, too,

[14] A. G. Hall,*Svenska Baptisternas Historia,* 1848–1898, Vol. 2, pp. 152–155.

[15] *Årsbok,* Svenska Baptistförsamlingarna inom Amerika, 1930–1931, Vol. 1, pp. 95–96.

he was unusually successful. Furthermore, in those early years of much prejudice concerning many aspects of denominational cooperation, his contribution to united Swedish Baptist work can hardly be overestimated. Ekman was a great missionary, indeed, who manifested a father's care for the whole denomination.[16] Like Silene, he wore himself out in the arduous task, and after two years, in November of 1884, he had to terminate the work.

In his next field of labor Ekman experienced marvelous blessings but also the greatest trial of his life. He had assumed the leadership of the Swedish Baptist Church of Stromsburg, Nebraska in the fall of 1884, and found a membership there decidedly discouraged and torn with internal strife. However, in a gracious revival tide many were converted, immersed, and added to the church. Backsliders were restored, and many who in the previous dissension had left the church returned. The old church became too small, and a new commodious sanctuary was erected, and dedicated February 27, 1886.[17]

But then a tempestuous storm descended upon the peaceful community of Stromsburg on the Nebraska prairie. As recorded in Chapter Ten, the Theological Seminary had been moved to Stromsburg in the winter of 1886. About that time Ekman preached a series of sermons on the doctrine of the atonement, concerning which the Seminary authorities and some of the church members felt that the pastor had embraced unorthodox views.[18] The upshot of the matter was that a division occurred in the church, in the course of which a small group left and organized a new congregation. Pastor Ekman, also, was rather severely censured by a council of denominational leaders who had come to recognize the new church. In the light of later developments it would seem that the judgment of the council was quite drastic. Undoubtedly it must have caused the good pastor the keenest of suffering to have been opposed in that controversy by his former teacher, J. A. Edgren, for whom he had the greatest love and admiration. To Ekman's credit it should be stated, however, that his love and admiration were sufficiently deep-rooted to last to the very end of Edgren's life; more than once Ekman made an appeal in the denominational press to the Swedish Baptists to give material relief to the poor and suffering founder of the Seminary.

From 1888 to 1905 Ekman ministered to the Swedish Baptist

---

[16] Hall, op cit., p. 429. See also *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* 1883, pp. 34, 55–56, 188, 223.

[17] Seaquist,*Conference Churches by the Oregon Trail,* 1872–1947, p. 35.

[18] For a more complete account of that controversy see Chapter Twenty-nine.

Church in New York City. During that period the membership increased from a comparatively small number to over 400. Responding to a call from Tacoma, Washington, in 1905, he moved from the extreme east to the extreme west, where he enjoyed a fruitful pastorate of twelve years.[19] After about three years of service in Firth, Idaho, the veteran preacher retired to Los Angeles, where he spent the declining years of his life. The end came peacefully October 7, 1929.

A. P. Ekman was truly a great man. As a denominational leader he was loyal, wise, and clear-sighted more than the average, and withal an original expounder of the Word, a sympathetic pastor and a man of prayer and faith. Being keenly interested in the history of Swedish Baptists, he wrote numerous articles within that field, including a History of the Swedish Baptists in Washington. His historical productions indicate painstaking research and a clear historical perspective.

STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE

After Ekman's resignation as general missionary, no effective measures were taken to replace him, although in succeeding years the Conference often expressed a desire to have a missionary again. In fact, Ekman was the only general missionary, in the ordinary sense of that term, that the General Conference ever had. For other so-called missionaries were not engaged and supported by the General Conference, but by the American Baptist Home Mission Socitey, or some other American Baptist agencies, and naturally were responsible only to them. Or they served as district missionaries, partly supported by the General Conference. In later decades the mission secretaries of the General Conference, to a certain extent at least, have been doing the same type of work as the general missionary did. The conscientious Ekman gave as one reason for his resignation his belief that the General Conference no longer would be able to support a missionary, since the churches at that time, in 1884, were asked to support the Seminary, which had become independent of the Baptist Union Theological Seminary.

During the year 1890 L. J. Ahlstrom served as General Conference missionary with his field in North Dakota.[20] In the fall of 1892 A. P. Hanson was engaged by the American Baptist Home Mission Society to do missionary work in the mid-western states. Although he was to contact the Swedish churches primarily, the object of his labor was to promote the work of the Home Mission Society rather than that of the General Conference.[21] Respected and esteemed by the Swedish Baptists, Hanson continued his missionary service until 1897.[22]

---

[19] Ekman, *Autobiographical Notes.*

[20] *Årsbok,* Allmänna Konferensen, 1890–1891, pp. 7, 10.

The Mormons in Utah quite early became an object of missionary interest among Swedish Baptists. Thus at the General Conference held in Minneapolis, September 21–23, 1882, the question was discussed, "What can be done for Utah?" In 1885, as the Conference met in Chicago, the same question was repeated, "Is the time now at hand for Swedish Baptists to have a missionary in Utah?"[23] A small Swedish Baptist Church had been organized in Salt Lake City, 1891. This, however, due to lack of missionary support, ceased to exist after a few years. For nearly thirty years the General Conference had passed resolutions to the effect that something ought to be done to preach the gospel to the Swedes in Utah. But not until about the turn of the century was a Swedish Baptist missionary sent to the Mormon state. The same was true of the other mountain states — Colorado, Montana, and Idaho. For several years, and as late as the year 1900, appeals were made to the American Baptist Home Mission Society to aid the General Conference in the support of a missionary for the mountain states.[24] The appeal was refused, however, and the Swedish Conference did not dare to venture out on faith.

The state of Texas, which was another home mission objective, fared somewhat better for in 1894 E. Tornquist was sent to evangelize the ten thousand Swedes of that large state. The Baptist State Convention of Texas pledged half of the support for the missionary.[25] Apparently he did not remain very long on the field, for at several annual meetings of the General Conference in the late nineties resolutions were passed to the effect that missionary work ought to be resumed in Texas. A cheerful report, therefore, was the announcement by the executive committee of the General Conference to the annual meeting in the year 1900, that a missionary had finally been engaged for that large southern state.[26] Christopher Silene commenced his work there in the summer of 1900 and continued until 1905. The Conference, however, can claim no credit for that since Silene drew his entire support from the Texas Baptist State Convention.

Hence it must regretfully be recorded that the General Conference, ever since Ekman's time as general missionary in 1882–1884 and up to and beyond the turn of the century, had very largely failed to realize its four objectives, as stated in the Constitution of the early years:

---

[21] *Årsbok,* 1893, pp. 15–17.

[22] Adolf Olson, *A History of Bethel Theological Seminary,* 1871–1946, p. 95.

[23] *Årsbok,* 1888–1889, pp. 10, 11.

[24] *Årsbok,* 1900–1901, pp. 17, 21.

[25] *Årsbok,* 1893–1894, p. 12.

[26] *Årsbok,* 1900–1901, p. 18.

1 To promote missionary work among the Swedes in America.
2 To encourage and support foreign missions.
3 To support the denominational Training School for preachers.
4 To supply and spread denominational literature.[27]

To be sure, the Seminary was supported by the Swedish Baptist churches during its first period of independence, St. Paul-Stromsburg, 1884–1888. However, since the school at that time was not owned and operated by the General Conference, as is the case now, but by a private board or corporation, the General Conference as such assumed no financial obligations for its maintenance. Yet, it is altogether likely that, had the Seminary remained in St. Paul and independent of American Baptists, the General Conference would have taken it over and rallied to its support, as was done later in 1914. In such an event, the school would have become a potent factor in the creation of a much needed denominational consciousness, and caused a new stream of blessing to flow through all the churches. When the Seminary returned to Chicago in 1888, to its dependent position, and later became a department in the Divinity School of the University of Chicago, the General Conference assumed the financial responsibility for the salary of the third teacher. That arrangement obtained until the separation of the Seminary from the Divinity school in 1912. In the early years the salary for which the General Conference was obligated was only nine hundred dollars, and half of that amount, at least for a few years in the early nineties, came from the Endowment Fund.[28]

In the early nineties one August Jernberg in Chicago, who had made a lot of easy money through real estate ventures, conceived the idea of raising an endowment fund for the Seminary. He himself promised $50,000.00 on the condition that the churches raise an equal amount. The Swedish Baptists responded generously with the result that their pledges soon reached the sum of $43,000.00, including about seven thousand dollars in cash. However, as is often the case, money easily made is easily lost. When the financial crash came in 1893, Jernberg's whole enterprise collapsed, and his good intentions were replaced by large deficits. His own pledge to the Endowment Fund of $50,000.00, went by the board, and, what seemed even worse, when the crash came he had about $6,300.00 of the churches' money in his possession.[29] Fortunately a part of that sum was later recovered and provided for a few years, or up to 1898, four hundred and fifty dollars annually toward the salary of the third Seminary teacher.

---

[27] *Årsbok,* 1897–1898, p. 3.

[28] *Årsbok,* 1896, p. 33. 1897, p. 25.

There was indeed a struggle for existence in those pioneer years of the General Conference. In 1894 the entire amount raised by the churches as reported by the Conference treasurer amounted to only $175.00.[30] Gradually, however, the stewardship spirit improved with the result that the receipts from the churches reached $997.08 in 1896.[31] The method of gathering funds was the apportionment system which was in vogue for several decades both in the General Conference and in state conferences. To begin with, the annual apportionment was five cents per member. This was increased to seven cents in the middle nineties, and at the turn of the century to ten cents. More or less resentment, however, was felt in the churches toward the system of apportionment; for to many it connoted the idea of a tax. In the last twenty-five years a more direct voluntary system, based upon an actual realization of the needs of each agency, has proved a blessing to all the churches and their missionary projects.

In trying to evaluate the work of the General Conference during the first twenty years, or more, of its existence, and assign reasons for its slow progress, at least three factors loom large. The first one concerned the state and district conferences. In the early years the General Conference had an important mission to new and unoccupied fields as well as in aiding the infant churches in their missionary work. The state and district conferences, however, had developed quite rapidly to the extent that they could care for the needs within their own areas, assisting the smaller churches and maintaining missionaries of their own. Hence it was felt that the General Conference, in its aspect of a mission society, had been displaced by the state conferences.[32]

The second reason for the slow progress of the General Conference is to be found in the American Baptist Missionary Societies with their strong appeal to Swedish Baptists. The records bear out the fact that Swedish Baptist churches, from the very first one in Rock Island, Illinois, and down through the century, have had a warm and active interest in missions, and primarily in foreign missions. Practically all their foreign missionary work before 1944 was channeled through the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society (formerly the Baptist Missionary Union). And although no reliable statistics are available, it is a well known fact that Swedish Baptists annually gave considerable sums of money to that society for the evangelization of the heathen. Then there were the other two national societies — the American Baptist Home Mission Society, and the American Baptist Publication Society. For several decades both of these societies contributed generously of their funds to assist the Swedish Baptist churches in their gospel crusade. What was more natural, therefore, than that these societies should receive a fair return on the part of the Swedes? Moreover, the status of dependence and an extended leaning upon the aid of a stronger American brother did not tend to lead the Swedish churches to use their own resources to their fullest extent. The result was a retarded growth. In the midst of that situation, the General Conference received for many years a rather step-motherly treatment from the churches. For example, the New England Conference reported in 1908 that contributions for the local conference amounted to $561.91, for the General Conference only $304.59, and for foreign missions $954.98. Or, to use other figures, in the year 1910 the Swedish churches gave not less than $20,000.00 to the American Societies, of which $9,000.00 went to the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society; whereas the General Conference from the same sources received only $5,000.00.[33]

---

[29] *Årsbok,* 1893–1894, pp. 14–15. 1898, p. 19. See also Olson, *Seminary History,* op. cit., pp. 42–43.

[30] *Årsbok,* 1894, p. 24.

[31] *Årsbok,* 1897, p. 49.

[32] *Årsbok,* 1895, p. 21. See also Eric Wingren, *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Aug. 4, 1897, p. 4.

Third, it would appear that before 1913, when the General Conference decided to assume the responsibility for its own school work, primarily the training of pastors and missionaries, there had been no conference project big enough and sufficiently challenging to appeal to the heroic and sacrificial elements in human nature. Most certainly there could be no inspiration in the admission made by one of the denominational leaders in 1899: "As a Conference of some twenty thousand members all we do is to pay the salary of one seminary teacher, and publish the Annual. This is altogether too little."[34] And yet, a visitor at any of the annual meetings fifty years ago would most likely get the impression that the General Conference was a beehive of activity. Numerous motions, as recommended by two committees on business who were busily at work almost day and night, would be passed at every session. The weakness of the whole system was that many of the decisions were never carried out in practice.

---

[33] *Årsbok,* 1907–1908, p. 59, and 1910–1911, p. 31.

[34] P. A. Hjelm. *Nya Wecko-Posten,* April 5, 1899, p. 1.

Nevertheless, from the foregoing it would be unfair to draw the conclusion that the General Conference in its long time of infancy and youth, 1879–1914, accomplished little or nothing. Some of the more outstanding achievements may be summarized as follows:

1. It has served as a bond of unity between the churches as it has emphasized the more important aspects of the fellowship and the common work.
2. It has maintained a spirit of mutual helpfulness in the churches.
3. It has served as a framework for the discussion and nourishment of ideas and methods of service in the common task of Kingdom projects.
4. It has promoted a sound faith and a good spiritual life in the churches. In the early years especially, the annual meetings of the General Conference served, to a large extent, as a theological training school.
5. It has created and fostered a missionary spirit in the group, without which no church can ever flourish and succeed in a strictly spiritual sense. Missionary work on a world-wide scale requires the cooperation of churches, or groups of churches.
6. The annual meetings, too, by means of minutes, reports, and statistics constitute very important source material for the preservation of the denominational history.[35]

THE FIFTIETH JUBILEE

The Fiftieth Jubilee in 1902 became in several respects an important milestone in the history of the General Conference as well as in Swedish Baptist churches in general. From that time denominational activities assume a more definite form. Three trends, in particular, are noticeable: An increased interest in missions, a concern for the establishment of educational institutions, and the beginning of philanthropic work in the form of children's homes and homes for the aged.

The Jubilee Conference itself was a great celebration and the most impressive event in Swedish Baptist history up to that time. Chicago, with its thirteen Swedish Baptist churches and a combined membership of approximately 2,000, being at that time the largest Swedish Baptist center in America, was the meeting place. The Conference proper met during the first part of the week, September 23–25, in the First Church (Addison Street Church), and the jubilee sessions were held in the later part of the week, September 25–28, in the Immanuel Baptist Church (American) on South Michigan Avenue. The attendance was impressive. At the first session nearly seven hundred delegates had registered, including three hundred from Minnesota. Before the end of the Jubilee the number of registered delegates increased to about one thousand.

---

[35] Frank Peterson, *Femtio År,* 1852–1902, pp. 21–23.

The program, also, was very impressive and worthy of an important historical celebration. Very naturally, therefore, most of the messages were historical in nature, dealing with God's grace during the past fifty years. Pastor A. P. Ekman of New York preached the Jubilee sermon, using as his text Ps. 48: 13–15. Having chosen as his theme "Our Calling," the speaker discussed the following thoughts: (1) Our Earthly Calling, or what we were. (2) Our Holy Calling, or what we are, and (3) Our Heavenly Calling, or what we shall be. Not less than six major historical addresses were delivered, namely:

1. Frank Peterson, "Fifty Years," stressing the historical high lights of the years 1852–1902;
2. Olof Lindh, "Pioneer Missionary Work;"
3. C. G. Lagergren, "The History of the Seminary;"
4. C. Silene, "Denominational Literature;"
5. A. Tjernlund, "What has promoted and what has hindered the growth of Swedish Baptists in America;"
6. Andrew Blomgren, "God in History." The secretary recorded that Blomgren in that profound message did ample justice to the appellation given him by his friends, "the philosopher of Minnesota." All of the addresses were masterpieces of the highest order.[36]

Probably the most impressive part of the Fiftieth Jubilee Conference was the presentation of the pioneers. About seventy-five men and women came to the platform, such who had been affiliated with Swedish Baptist churches since 1875, or earlier, and gave glowing testimonies about God's redeeming grace and keeping power. The hero of that group, as well as of the whole conference, was John Alexis Edgren, who, although in feeble health, had come all the way from California to attend the Jubilee. There he was, that noble founder of the Seminary, and founder of the denominational press, and thanked God for the part that he had been allowed to play in the early development of the denomination. At the large communion service on Sunday afternoon, in which three thousand Swedish Baptists participated, an offering was lifted for Edgren, which amounted to $432.00. Later this sum was increased by individual gifts. Pastor Eric Rosen, who presided at the communion table, took occasion to give some advice to the recipient of the love gift:

---

[36] *Nya Wecko-Posten,* September 30 and October 7, 1902. See also *Baneret* September and October, 1902. It is regrettable that a fire in the printing establishment destroyed all the manuscripts of the Jubilee addresses, which were to be published in book form. Only Frank Peterson's address was reproduced "in toto."

> Now, brother Edgren, be careful and do not give away your money on the journey back to California, but keep it and apply it toward procuring a home for you and your wife in your declining years.[37]

An important and highly inspirational feature of the Jubilee Celebrations was the report on the Jubilee Mission Fund. It was indeed proper that a celebrating people should present a worthy token of thanksgiving to the Lord for His abundant mercies during the past fifty years. Frank Peterson, that brilliant Swedish Baptist leader and missionary statesman, who had been entrusted with the responsibility of raising the Fund, reported the receipts by states, or districts, the total of which amounted to the encouraging sum of $7,802.50.[38] The following year that sum had increased to $8,411.13, and in 1912 it had reached the amount of $12,248.39.[39] Since by vote of the Conference only the interest of the money could be used, the Fund became a constant source of blessing in the General Conference missionary work.

At this point some statistics, indicating the growth in membership during the first fifty years of Swedish Baptist history, might prove to be both valuable and encouraging. By decades the growth was as follows: In the first decade, 1852–1862, there were 9 churches organized which survived and existed at the Jubilee in 1902, with a combined membership that year of 659. In the second decade, 1862–1872, there were 24 new churches formed with a combined membership of 3,769 in 1902. The third decade, 1872–1882, saw not less than 59 new churches come into existence, having a combined membership in 1902 of 5,281. In the fourth decade, 1882–1892, the large number of 130 new churches were organized, with a combined membership of 8,682 in 1902. This was the greatest number of churches formed in any decade during a century of Swedish Baptist work. In the fifth decade, 1892–1902, there were formed 102 new churches, having a combined membership of 3,378 in 1902.[40] The total number of churches at the Fiftieth Jubilee in 1902 was 324, with a combined membership of 21,769. From the General Conference point of view it might also be stated that in 1879, when the Conference was founded, there were only

---

[37] Ahlstrom, *John Alexis Edgren,* p. 203.

[38] *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Oct. 7, 1902, p. 1.

[39] *Årsbok,* 1903–1904, p. 18; 1912–1913, p. 45.

[40] A. P. Ekman, *Baptistsamfundet. Nya Wecko-Posten,* Jubileumsnummer, September 23, 1902.

65 Swedish Baptist churches in the whole country with a combined membership of 3,000. Fifteen years later, in 1894, the number of churches had increased to 238, with a membership of 17,223. And at the Fiftieth Jubilee in 1902, as stated above, the churches numbered 324, and the total membership 21,769.[41]

The financial statistics apparently are not as encouraging as the growth in membership. One should bear in mind, however, for the sake of a fair evaluation, that Swedish Baptists in the first half century of their history, were mostly immigrants, who were practically all quite poor. Thus, in the year 1894, the grand total of all giving, local and missions, was $193,464.98. That same year the General Conference from all sources received the small sum of $453.23. By 1902, at the time of the Jubilee Conference, the financial picture was somewhat brighter. The records show a grand total of $267,729.55, of which the General Conference shared to the amount of $2,225.50. It is significant that the American Baptist societies for home and foreign missions the same year received from the Swedish churches not less than $12,276.94. In the years 1902–1948 the membership nearly doubled, whereas the giving for all purposes in 1948 was about nine times as large as in 1902.

As the large crowd of Jubilee people returned to their respective homes in various parts of the country, it was with the feeling that a new day had dawned for Swedish Baptists, a day of greater solidarity and more heroic achievements. In this they were not to be disappointed, for an increased activity along several lines during the next decade prepared for and ushered in the time when the General Conference had reached maturity and was prepared to step out to do great things for Christ and His gospel.

AN ENLARGED FRONT

It really was a great day, although apparently so insignificant in its beginning, when the kind-hearted pastor Rosen of the Chicago Englewood church informed the General Conference, September 14, 1899, that he had received twenty-five dollars for a proposed Old People's Home.[42] On his request how to use the money, he was commissioned to administer whatever funds would accrue until the opportune time should come for the building of such a home. The following year Rosen reported $103.50 in the treasury, sixty-three dollars of which had been raised by his own church. In fact, the idea of providing a haven of rest for pilgrims in their declining years had been pressingly near to Rosen's heart for a long time. For years at every General Conference meeting he had made stirring appeals for that project. Finally, his dream became a reality. In 1902 a large gift of $1,000 spurred to action, and on November 1 of that year the Fridhem Society was organized, which resulted in the Fridhem Home of Rest, Morgan Park, Chicago. The story of charitable institutions will be covered more fully in a later chapter.

---

[41] Ekman, "Allmänna Konferensen nu och för femton år sedan," *Nya Wecko-Posten,* September 26, 1894. See also Frank Peterson, *Femtio År,* 1852–1902, p. 27.

[42] *Årsbok,* 1899–1900, pp. 10, 12. 1900–1901, p. 24.

It was a great day, too, when, in 1903, J. E. Klingberg, at that time pastor of the Swedish Baptist Church, New Britain, Connecticut, found three little homeless boys and brought them to his own home for shelter and protection. That was the small beginning of the Klingberg Children's Home, "The Home that Prayer Built," which, through the years, has caused streams of blessings to flow, not only to the many children who found a refuge in the home but also to the heart of the noble founder himself, and not least to Swedish Baptists and others who helped God answer Klingberg's prayers.

The spirit of charity and good works continued to be active in the denomination with the result that before long two other homes for the aged were established. In the case of the Sunset Home, Concordia, Kansas, it was August Johnson, "the Kansas Apostle," who first recognized the need for such a home in that area, and who gave the first impetus for its realization. He himself pledged the first one hundred dollars for the project. The first meeting for the purpose of considering the advisability of creating an old people's home in Kansas was held in the home of A. G. Lagerquist, pastor in Chanute, February 18, 1905. A fund of $625.00 was subscribed at that time. At a later meeting the same year it was decided to organize and incorporate the institution in Kansas under the name of Sunset Home Society.[43] The first location of the home was in Clay Center, and in 1911 it was moved to Concordia. The Elim Park Home for the Aged was founded in 1907, and located on a beautiful spot near Bridgeport, Connecticut.

When the Seminary under Edgren's leadership became independent, in 1884, and moved to St. Paul, and after a year to Stromsburg, Nebraska, it was his plan, in addition to the Seminary, to start an Academy, or High School, and also a College. However, the early breakdown of his health prevented the realization of those high aspirations. Several years passed, and nothing happened along the line of enlarging the educational setup of Swedish Baptists. But the year

[43] J. O. Backlund, *Swedish Baptists in America*, p. 123.

1903 became epochal in launching the movement for an enlarged front in the field of education. It was the year after the inspiring Jubilee Conference, and a fresh impulse and a divine imperative caused the Swedish Baptists to go forward and enlarge the boundaries of various types of missionary activity. The General Conference met that year in Stromsburg, Nebraska. Frank Peterson had been assigned to speak on the topic, "The Growing Needs in Missions," and Eric Sandell, "What We Ought to Do in a Practical Way to Meet Those Needs." Both the speakers seemed to have been divinely led to declare that the time had come to enlarge the educational front, both for the sake of ministerial students and for young people in general. The way to realize that goal was to establish an academy, or a high school.

The committee on business expressed as its view that the time was ripe for the establishment of a Swedish-American institution of higher learning (läroverk), and recommended that a committee of three be elected, composed of Frank Peterson and Olof Bodien of Minneapolis and O. P. Peterson of St. Paul, for the purpose of making preparation for the realization of such a plan as soon as possible. The committee further suggested that the school be located in Minnesota. The suggestion was adopted.[44] At the next General Conference, held in Kansas City, Missouri, September 7–9, 1904, the original committee of three was enlarged by four new members — R. O. Earl, Arvid Gordh, John Nicholson, and John Halvarson. The committee was instructed to "arrange a school board, to incorporate the school, and in behalf of the Conference to lead the cause of the school to every possible success and development."[45] The outcome of two years of preparatory work was a school named Bethel Academy, which opened its doors for the first time October 2, 1905 in the Elim Church of Minneapolis. Around that infant institution there raged considerable controversy in the early years. That, however, did not prevent an increasing number of young people from wending their way to Bethel in search of knowledge and Christ and a deeper life in Him. For a more complete account of the Educational Missions see Chapter Twenty-three.

In Seattle, Washington, Swedish Baptists made another venture in the field of education the same fall that Bethel started. Supported by the churches in the Pacific Northwest, and more particularly by a few men of means, Adelphia College apparently had a bright future. And with Emanuel Schmidt, a young and enthusiastic scholar at the helm, the institution made good progress for some years.

---

[44] *Årsbok,* 1903–1904, pp. 12, 34–35.

[45] *Årsbok,* 1904–1905, p. 36.

MISSIONS IN THE MOUNTAIN STATES AND IN TEXAS

Two of the trends in the enlarged front that followed in the wake of the Fiftieth Jubilee Conference have passed in brief review, namely charitable institutions and general education. It now remains to trace briefly the story of General Conference Home Missions, especially as it relates to the Mountain States and Texas. After 1914 Home Missions, on the basis of a new constitution, enlarged its boundaries to include the whole General Conference area. On the other hand, missions in Texas and the Mountain States gradually declined, beginning in the early twenties. In 1928 the Mission Secretary reported to the General Conference that the missionary in the Mountain States had been retired, due to the limitations of the field and the lack of response on the part of the Swedes who dwelt in that area.[46]

To the many who for years had advocated missions in the Mountain States it was indeed welcome news when the executive committee of the General Conference, meeting in New York City, September 18–21, 1901, reported that a missionary had been engaged for the Colorado field. Allfrid Sjolander had started his work there in August of that year, and thus, in a sense, he became the forerunner of a long line of missionaries and missionary pastors in that part of the country.[47] The American Baptist State Convention of Colorado paid half of the missionary's salary. Sjolander was a wise Kingdom builder, a good organizer, a gifted writer and a thought-provoking preacher of the gospel. Success, too, crowned his efforts. The following year he could report to the Conference that new fields had been opened in Colorado, people had been converted, scattered Swedish Baptists in the mining districts had been encouraged and upbuilded in the faith, two new churches had been organized, and the Swedish Baptist membership in the state had increased forty per cent since the missionary began his labors.[48] The needs, as Sjolander had learned to know them, were desperate, both in Colorado and the other mountain states. A great spiritual darkness prevailed among the 60,000 Swedes who lived, dispersed far and wide, in that large area of the country. In 1904 there were eight Swedish Baptist churches in those states; in the whole district there were only three preachers, one in Colorado and two in Montana. Utah, Idaho and Wyoming had no Swedish Baptist gospel workers.[49] After some three years of incessant labor in Colorado,

---

[46] *Årsbok,* 1928–1929, p. 30.
[47] *Årsbok,* 1901–1902, p. 21.
[48] *Årsbok,* 1902–1903, p. 14.
[49] *Årsbok,* 1904–1905, p. 9.

Sjolander moved to Topeka, Kansas in 1904. He was not replaced by another missionary until 1908, when Axel Tjernlund began a short period of service.

As previously recorded, to preach the gospel to the Mormons of Utah had for years been a concern to several missionary leaders among Swedish Baptists. However, it was not until 1904 that that concern was more definitely realized. In the fall of that year A. G. Sandblom began an aggressive work in Salt Lake City and surrounding territory. A few responded to the gospel call and believed. But Mormon superstition constituted a veritable stone wall which was next to impossible to break through. After two years Sandblom moved to Oregon. John A. Lindberg, who was appointed missionary in 1910 and remained until 1913, organized a church in Salt Lake City in 1911,[50] and encouraged the building of a house of worship. For a short time prospects looked bright, but the interest proved fitful, and the church finally disbanded in 1930.

In Texas, too, the soil proved to be rather stony for Swedish Baptists. After C. Silene had closed his missionary labors there in 1905, several years elapsed before successful efforts were made to resume the work. E. O. Schugren, G. Nygren and C. E. Wedholm succeeded each other there between the years 1916 to 1925. However, since the Swedish population in Texas was never very large, and other denominations had preempted the field, it was deemed advisable to abandon the work in favor of more fruitful missionary projects. Nevertheless, it should be stated, and with Scriptural authority, too, that the sowing in tears, with toil and sacrifice, on the Texas and mountain states fields, must somehow bring a reaping with joy on the part of the faithful missionaries.

MISSIONARY WORK IN CANADA

Canada, especially in the first stages of the missionary work there, became considerably more fruitful as a mission field than the mountain states. An increasing number of Swedish immigrants had settled in the western provinces, a number of whom were Baptists. Manitoba alone claimed to have, in the first decade of the present century, not less than about 50,000 persons of Scandinavian descent. In 1905 there were 12 Swedish Baptist churches in western Canada. Most of these had their own pastors, who were largely supported by the Canadian (English) Baptists. However, the Swedish Baptists of the States felt it both a duty and a privilege to enter the great harvest field to the North.

---

[50] *Årsbok,* 1911–1912, p. 17. 1912–1913, p. 15.

Fred Palmborg, who became the first general missionary to Canada, began his work there July 1, 1905. After two months on the field he was able to give a most encouraging report to the General Conference which met in the month of September in Seattle.[51] Not less than twelve converts had been immersed. His next report, in the fall of 1906, was a soul-stirring account of hardships, to be sure, in the severe Canadian winters. But, above all, it was a record of God's marvelous protection of His servant and of divine grace poured out in the winning of many lost souls for Christ. Eighty-one converts had been immersed and three new churches organized.[52] Such reports had an envigorating effect upon the whole General Conference. It seemed as if a new day had dawned for Swedish Baptists. The contribution of $1,000 to the Canadian Mission was, indeed, money well spent. That sum was increased from year to year, and amounted to $2,400 in 1914, and $7,715.69 in 1951.

The missionary news from Canada continued to be most encouraging. The church at Midale experienced a gracious revival in the winter of 1907–1908, in which 54 new members were added to the church, and the membership more than doubled. Another missionary, N. J. L. Bergen, was engaged to assist Palmborg in the work. To the Conference, held in St. Paul, Minnesota, 1908, it was reported that 85 converts had been immersed in the Canadian field during the year, the number of churches had increased to 19, and the combined membership to 537.[53] In 1910, 24 churches were reported, with a membership of 660. Eighty-three converts had followed Christ in baptism. P. Alfred Peterson had joined the other two missionaries, his field being especially British Columbia.[54] Palmborg was a very aggressive missionary and, in every way, well qualified to break ground for Swedish Baptist mission work in the immense area of Western Canada. He was a man of robust health, a winsome personality, and was, above all, a very zealous and earnest soul-winner. It was sad news, therefore, when he handed in his resignation in the fall of 1910. He had worn himself out in the strenuous work and needed a rest.

J. P. Sundstrom was called to become Palmborg's successor, and he began his work in the early part of 1911. Cooperation with the Canadian Baptists continued on the same plan as before. The secretary of the Baptist Union of Western Canada told the Swedish missionary: "You are here to superintend the Scandinavian work,"[55] and as superintendent-missionary he carried on very successfully for eleven years, or until March, 1922. His first report to the General Conference in September, 1911, was vibrant with optimism and great encouragement. Three missionaries, thirteen pastors and nine student pastors had been busy preaching the gospel, at least part of the year. By 1914 the number of churches had reached 27, having a combined membership of more than eight hundred.[56] However, there was a note of pessimism in the annual report of the superintendent. The country was in the grip of an economic depression, which had begun before the War, and had increased in intensity for several years. Thousands of people, as a result, left Canada to seek their livelihood elsewhere. Many Swedes returned to Sweden; others crossed over the boundary line into the United States. As the mission funds were constantly shrinking, many of the pastors were forced to leave. The membership was greatly reduced, and three churches had to disband. By 1920 the courageous Sundstrom wrote that destruction threatened the whole Swedish Baptist work in Canada.[57] However, Palmborg and Sundstrom with their many fellow-laborers had built so well that the churches were able to weather the storm and survive.

---

[51] *Årsbok,* 1905–1906, p. 18.

[52] *Årsbok,* 1906, pp. 31–36. Palmborg also frequently wrote inspiring and factual accounts in Nya Wecko-Posten, which constitute valuable source material of the Canadian Mission.

[53] *Årsbok,* 1907–1908, pp. 45–49.

[54] *Årsbok,* 1909–1910, pp. 45–52.

In December, 1922, J. Paul Erickson succeeded Sundstrom as superintendent of Swedish Baptist missions in Canada. The economic condition in the country gradually improved, and this again brought new courage and new opportunities to the churches. By 1924 two new churches had been organized, and a five weeks' Bible Training school for young people had been conducted in Wetaskiwin, Alberta, in January and February, 1925. The school, which was in charge of P. Alfred Peterson, continued, considerably enlarged, for some twenty years under the name of Alberta Baptist Bible Academy. In his first report to the General Conference in September, 1923, Erickson suggested as a goal the desirability of the Swedish churches becoming independent of the English Baptists (Baptist Union of Western Canada).[58] That goal was finally realized after some twenty-five years. The office of missionary-superintendent was discontinued in 1930, and district missionaries

[55] *Årsbok,* 1910–1911, p. 57.
[56] *Årsbok,* 1913–1914, p. 47.
[57] *Årsbok,* 1920–1921, p. 51.
[58] *Årsbok,* 1922–1923, p. 46.

cared for the needs for a few years. In 1938 a general missionary was again placed upon the large Canada field.

THE FIRST MISSION SECRETARY

The front of the General Conference was constantly enlarging following the Jubilee in 1902. Home Missions, especially, was on the march. More and more the need for a unified leadership became paramount. The time to act and supply that need was ripe at the annual meeting of the General Conference in Englewood, Chicago, September 26–29, 1906. G. Arvid Hagstrom, the genial and evangelistic pastor of the First Swedish Baptist Church (Addison Street) of Chicago, was elected with much enthusiasm to serve as the first mission secretary. His duties, in general, would be to consolidate, unify, promote and encourage all the various activities within the framework of the General Conference, to raise the necessary funds for such activities, to take care of the Conference correspondence, and to edit the Annual and other literature as the needs might arise. Hagstrom began his service on January 1, 1907, and continued until October 31, 1909. It was an amazing amount of work he crowded into the space of three brief years, probably seldom, if ever, equalled in the whole history of the denomination.

The years following the Jubilee had seen a considerable growth in membership. There had been an increase from 21,769 in 1902, to 25,743 at the close of 1906, representing a net gain in members of about four thousand in four years. In 1906 there were 20 state or district conferences, and 341 churches. The same year 1,758 baptisms were recorded, and a combined net gain in membership of 1,360.[59]

The mission secretary was young and energetic with an unusually fertile mind. In order to make a fairly accurate appraisal of the General Conference, with its immediate as well as more remote needs, he sent a questionnaire to all the ministers and some laymen. About forty of the questionnaires were returned, which were carefully studied and analyzed into twenty-seven different groups. Of the twenty-seven suggestions received the following seemed to be of particular importance as indicating the trend of thinking in the denomination at that time. Some of those sound and sensible suggestions had to wait forty years for their realization:

1. More practical instruction in the Theological Seminary.
2. More comprehensive elementary preparation as prerequisites for admission to the Seminary.

---

[59] *Årsbok,* 1907, p. 31.

> 3. A publication department under control of the Conference, including a denominationally owned book store and paper.
>
> 4. At least twenty more home missionaries.
>
> 5. All activities within the denomination, such as philanthropic projects, educational work, and direct missionary undertakings, except what is done by the state conferences, should be done by and be under the control of the General Conference.[60]

Hagstrom's concluding report to the General Conference in Manistique, Michigan, September 7–12, 1909, representing two years and ten months of service as mission secretary, reveals the fact that the mission secretary possessed an extraordinary capacity for persistent and painstaking labor:

> Of the Conference churches, about two hundred have received shorter or longer visits, a few of them several times. Furthermore, between forty and fifty fields have been visited, where we have no work. During this time the journeys have been many and long, varying from a week to over three months, and covering a combined distance of 58,085 miles. - - - - I have made 827 visits in homes, churches, institutions of mercy, etc., and have delivered 986 sermons and addresses. On all these missionary tours your servant has carried the suitcase, his moveable home, in one hand, and the typewriter in the other; for otherwise it would have been impossible to perform all the tasks entrusted to him. Therefore, in hotels, on railroads, at depots, on boats, in churches, homes, pastors' studies, on street corners, in the woods, mountains, plains, and in tents, we have taken care of the constantly increasing correspondence of the Conference, having sent out 9,384 letters and postal cards.[61]

During his term of service, the General Conference developed a stronger sense of denominational consciousness. It constituted a decided step in the onward march to maturity. At his resignation, to accept the pastorate of the First Swedish Baptist Church, St. Paul (Payne Avenue), efforts were made to find a suitable man, but without success. Consequently no one was appointed to take his place, and the office was allowed to pass out of existence. In its place the office of Corresponding and Financial Secretary was created and was held for a number of years by the Manager of the Publication Department.[62] At the Conference in Worcester, Massachusetts, in the fall of 1920, the office of Mission Secretary was revived, and a man was elected to that post.

[60] *Årsbok,* 1907, pp. 31–35.

[61] *Årsbok,* 1908–1909, p. 35.

[62] Backlund, *Swedish Baptists in America,* p. 82.

ORIGIN OF THE LITERATURE DEPARTMENT

Since the mission of literature will receive a more adequate treatment in Chapter Twenty-four, it will not be necessary in this connection to give a detailed account of that important work. Yet, inasmuch as distinctly denominationally owned and controlled literature is a part of that onward march of faith which began with the Jubilee Conference of 1902, there would seem to be sufficient reason for relating the humble beginning of that story relative to the larger program of the General Conference. In fact, that humble beginning became epochal in the history of Swedish Baptists. For it provided an opportunity for the General Conference to become for the first time, in a proper sense of that word, a property owner.

The source of the denominationally owned stream of literature can be traced to a motion by the delegation from Nebraska at the annual meeting of the General Conference held in Boston, September 11–15, 1907. The motion was to the effect that the General Conference establish a book concern. On recommendation of the committee on business, the Conference voted down the Nebraska proposition, to be revived, however, in the near future. Moreover, it is interesting to discover that the Swedish Baptists of Nebraska at that time were brim full of new ideas relative to an enlarged denominational front. For at the same meeting in Boston the aforesaid delegation had vision enough for the future to propose General Conference foreign missions.[63] That suggestion had to wait many years for its realization, but in due time it was bound to come.

At the following annual meeting of the Conference, September 9–12, 1908, in St. Paul, Minnesota, it was decided to elect a committee on literature and to charge said committee with the responsibility of investigating the possibility of publishing a denominationally owned paper. At the same time the American Baptist Publication Society informed the delegates that whenever the General Conference would be prepared to start a publishing business of their own, they (the Publication Society) would suspend the Swedish department of their establishment.[64] Actuated, as it was by the instincts of self-assertion and self-preservation, the Conference moved with more than usual speed. A year later, in Manistique, Michigan, September, 1909, the Literature Committee recommended the purchasing of the Swedish books and "Barnens Tidning" (a Sunday School paper) of the American Baptist Publication Society. That business transaction was consummated on December 1, 1909.[65] It was indeed a red letter day in the history of the General Conference! Another forward step in realizing a denominational consciousness! And yet, it has remained comparatively unnoticed. Divine blessings, too, rested upon the venture from its very inception. For in nine months the number of subscribers to "Barnens Tidning" increased from 600 to 10,300. E. S. Lindblad, a man of outstanding integrity and nobility of character, was chosen to become the first manager of the book store, located in the Chicago loop, and also editor of "Barnens Tidning," as well as corresponding secretary of the General Conference.

---

[63] *Årsbok,* 1907, p. 13.

[64] *Årsbok,* 1907–1908, pp. 13, 15, 66.

A denominationally owned paper — that is the other part of the thrilling story of the origin of denominational literature. The origin of the Standard was in this wise. In November of 1907, Erik Sjostrand had started a young people's paper known as "Ungdoms-Stjärnan" (The Young People's Star). In this undertaking he was later succeeded by Arvid Gordh, who in his turn, in December 1910, transferred the ownership of the paper to the General Conference. Under a new name, "Svenska Standaret" (The Swedish Standard) it made its first appearance in January, 1911, at first as a monthly and after a year as a denominational weekly. The going for the new paper was not easy. For the privately owned paper "Nya Wecko-Posten," which had endeared itself to Swedish Baptists for almost a generation, could not readily be displaced by a new competitor. Nevertheless, the number of subscribers to "Svenska Standaret" was gradually climbing, having reached 2,222 in the fall of 1912.[66]

BETHEL ACADEMY AND THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY[67]

As previously recorded, the Seminary, after its excursion of independent life in St. Paul and Stromsburg, settled down securely as a department of the Divinity School of the University of Chicago. That was in 1888. The University took care of all the expenses, excepting the salary of the third teacher, which the General Conference supplied. From the financial point of view, it was leading a quiet and carefree life as far as the Seminary was concerned. All it had to do was to lean on the rich school supported by the Rockefeller funds. The

---

[65] *Årsbok,* 1908–1909, p. 63. 1909–1910, pp. 61–66.

[66] Backlund, op. cit., p. 96. *Årsbok* 1910–1911, pp. 95–96; 1911–1912, p. 94.

[67] For a more complete treatment of the educational work, see Chapter Twenty-three.

Conference, however, as noted above, had a hard time even to raise the small salary of one teacher.

Like lightning from a clear sky the disturbing news descended upon the peaceful Seminary community in the fall of 1910. The Chicago Baptist Theological Union (The body that represented the University of Chicago) had passed a resolution that virtually meant the termination of the union between the Swedish Baptist General Conference regarding the Seminary and the Baptist Theological Union of the University, which had existed since 1888. The General Conference, through its representative, Frank Peterson, reminded the University authorities that they had no legal right to break the contract made in 1888, without the consent of the second party. The University committee countered by presenting a reorganization plan for the Scandinavian Seminary, which practically would have meant the end of the Seminary as an independent department of the Divinity School. The General Conference, at its meeting in Kiron, Iowa, September 5–11, 1911, stood pat in rejecting the reorganization plan, and saw no other solution to the problem than that the Baptist Theological Union and the Swedish Baptist General Conference hold to the agreement made in 1888.[68]

Matters then moved rapidly to a climax. The Board of Trustees of the Baptist Theological Union on January 9, 1912, took the following action:

> Resolved that the support and conduct of the Swedish School at Morgan Park be, on and after October 1, 1912, discontinued, and that the Swedish General Conference be notified that all agreements and arrangements heretofore made or existing by or between the Baptist Theological Union and the Swedish General Conference for support or conduct of the Swedish Seminary at Morgan Park by the Baptist Theological Union will, on the date named, be terminated and discontinued.[69]

The die was cast and the General Conference had no choice in the matter. Its relationship to and support by the University was terminated, as was very evident, against the will of the Seminary authorities and the leadership of the General Conference. However, the apparent trial became a blessing and in coming years greatly promoted the spread of the gospel. The General Conference was forced to take another forward step in its march of faith, most likely the greatest advance in its whole history. To the credit of the Baptist Theological Union and the University of Chicago, it should be stated that the Union promised the Swedish Seminary a grant of $10,000, spread over five years, regardless of where the Seminary would locate. Furthermore, their generous support of the Seminary through the years, without trying to exert any theological pressure or interference with the management of the school, is a fact for which Swedish Baptists owe their gratitude to that large educational institution.

---

[68] *Årsbok,* 1910–1911, p. 89. A most voluminous correspondence for nearly two years, undoubtedly the most voluminous in the whole history of Swedish Baptists, was carried on between the University of Chicago and Frank Peterson and other representatives of the General Conference. See *Årsbok* 1910–1911 and 1911–1912.

[69] *Årsbok,* 1911–1912, p. 78.

But the Morgan Park Seminary stood at the crossroads, especially in regard to future location. That the General Conference, by reason of what had happened, became entirely responsible for the school, financially and otherwise, no one doubted. What a tremendous, sudden challenge! Although for a short season somewhat divided in regard to the location of the Seminary, Swedish Baptists accepted the new challenge as one man and rallied to the support of the school. With respect to location there were two doors open. One was to move the Seminary to St. Paul, Minnesota, and merge it with the Bethel Academy. The other was to remain in Morgan Park, paying a nominal rent to the University for the use of Morgan Hall, the Seminary building. A referendum in the churches favored St. Paul as the future location of the Seminary.[70]

However, at the General Conference meeting in Chicago, September 10–14, 1912, a strong group of leading men refused to abide by the vote of the churches. An exceedingly animated, and at times tempestuous, debate ensued over that most controversial matter in the whole history of Swedish Baptists. And yet, the question seemed comparatively simple — the location of the Theological Seminary. Motions and counter motions were made in rapid succession, and the good moderator, even with the help of an attorney, became at times, utterly confused. Finally a wise brother made the motion to continue the Seminary in Morgan Park for another year, the General Conference, of course, being obligated for all expenses, and, further, to appoint a large and representative committee to study the whole matter for another year. The motion passed. The Conference held the next fall, September 9–13, 1913, in Duluth, Minnesota, has gone down in the annals of Swedish Baptists as "the peace Conference." For then, perfect harmony prevailed in regard to the location of the Seminary. The large school committee, representing every state conference in the whole

[70] *Årsbok,* 1911–1912, p. 81

country, recommended St. Paul as the place, and the merging of the Seminary and the Bethel Academy under one management. After favorable remarks by C. G. Lagergren, who had served as dean of the Seminary since 1889, the motion passed with only one dissenting vote. Profoundly moved, the whole assembly arose and sang, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow."[71]

It was a momentous decision, fraught with tremendous responsibilities, but also with marvelous possibilities for the future growth of the denomination. A school board, composed of 21 members, was elected, and G. Arvid Hagstrom, the former energetic mission secretary, and at that time pastor of the Payne Avenue Church, St. Paul, was elected president of the combined schools. He began his new work on January 1, 1914. The Seminary remained another year in Morgan Park, awaiting the erection of a building on the new campus in St. Paul. It was a great day in the history of Swedish Baptists when the combined schools, Bethel Academy and Theological Seminary, began their work in the fall of 1914. Truly, the General Conference had reached full maturity, being at that time thirty-five years old. It had begun to do big business for God and His Kingdom. And big business indeed it was, especially compared to what had been done for educational work up to that time, namely the paying of the salary of one seminary teacher, plus what individuals and churches had given to Bethel Academy. In contrast, what an encouraging report to the General Conference in St. Paul, September 22–26, 1914! During the ten months that Hagstrom had been on the field as president of the combined schools, he had raised $27,039.51 for the building fund, including a large donation of $10,000 from James Hill. During the same conference year the General Conference had expended $5,515.13 for the seminary which was still operating in Morgan Park.[72] Add to that about five thousand dollars for Bethel Academy, and a grand total of some thirty-seven thousand five hundred dollars is reached. All that for educational work in one year!

The great advance of the Conference called for a new, or revised constitution. The revision which was adopted in 1914 had particular reference to the Board of Trustees and the division of the work of the Conference on different committees. Three committees were created at that time, each consisting of twenty-one members: The Committee on Missions, the Committee on Literature, and the Committee on Education. Each of these committees was to handle the affairs of the Conference within its own specific department. All of them together constituted the Board of Trustees consisting of sixty-three members. Each of the three committees had its executive committee with its officers. The Board of Trustees was represented between the annual meetings by a general Executive Committee which was entrusted with any legal affairs that might need attention.[73]

---

[71] *Årsbok,* 1912–1913, p. 7.

[72] *Årsbok,* 1913–1914, pp. 45, 75.

Home missions, literature, education, these three! Home missions had been carried on, more or less effectively, since the beginning of the General Conference in 1879. Literature, denominationally owned and controlled, started in 1909. And Bethel Academy and Theological Seminary, under the sponsorship of the Conference, began operation in 1914. The fourth department, too, foreign missions, was soon to take its rightful place as a child of the General Conference.

FOREIGN MISSIONS[74]

The reason that foreign missions was slow in developing within the framework of the General Conference was not due to any lack of interest on the part of Swedish Baptists. Even the most casual perusal of the records of the early churches reveals the fact that foreign missions made a strong appeal to the heart of the pioneer believer. Offerings for foreign missions, both by the church itself and especially by the ladies' mission circles, were not only frequent but also comparatively large, considering the great poverty of the people. In most cases such offerings were sent to The Baptist Missionary Union (The American Baptist Foreign Mission Society), which, throughout the years and until quite recently, has been the chief medium by which Swedish Baptists have carried on quite an extensive foreign missionary activity. The records bear out the fact that contributions to foreign missions any particular year from the combined group of churches greatly exceeded contributions to any other missionary project. Therefore, with such an efficient agency as the Baptist Missionary Union with which to cooperate, the Swedish Baptist were slow in developing a sense of need of a foreign missions program of their own. However, factors were at work which prepared the way for such a project within the framework of the General Conference.

As recorded above, one of the main objectives of the General Conference from its very beginning, according to the earliest form of the constitution, was to promote and support foreign missions. Thus it is evident that when the Conference finally made the important decision to launch a foreign missionary project, it was only executing an important design of the original constitution adopted in 1880. Attempts had been made in Nebraska as early as 1909 to start independent Swedish Baptist foreign mission work. However, due to strenuous opposition on the part of denominational leadership, the movement did not succeed. But the foreign missionary urge was too strong to be permanently suppressed. In 1914 a young man by the name of G. Theofil Wickman felt the call of God to go out as a missionary to Spain. After several unsuccessful attempts to be sent by some mission society, Wickman finally launched out of his own accord, believing that God through His people would supply the necessary means. In that he was not disappointed. For Editor Wingren became interested in the project and placed at Wickman's disposal his influential weekly "Nya Wecko-Posten" by means of which Swedish Baptists, whose hearts to a large extent were hungry for an independent foreign mission, were given an opportunity to support the mission in Spain. Wingren himself for some years received and forwarded all the funds to the missionary.[75]

---

[73] Backlund, op. cit., p. 131.

[74] For a separate discussion of Foreign Missions, see Chapter Twenty-five.

In order to relieve Wingren of that responsibility as well as to give the project a more permanent character, some interested brethren in Chicago formed, in 1917, an independent foreign missions committee, later known as the Swedish Baptist Foreign Mission Society.[76] Two years later, E. W. Olson was sent by the Chicago committee as a missionary to Siberia. That became the starting point of the Russian mission.[77] On April 15, 1923 the work of the independent Swedish Baptist Foreign Mission Society was officially transferred to the General Conference.[78] That action turned out to be of momentous importance and a definite step of advance in the life of the General Conference. From that time the Conference sponsored four distinct departments of missionary activity, developed in the following order: home missions, literature or publications, educational work, and foreign missions.

The missionary fire continued with increasing strength to burn in the churches. In 1932 the Swedish Baptist young people assumed the financial responsibility for the Reuben Holms, who, in the service of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, were sent out as missionaries to Assam.[79] What had been done throughout the years for

[75] *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Feb. 9, 1915, p. 6.
[76] *Svenska Standaret,* Jan. 25, 1917.
[77] *Svenska Standaret,* May 13, 1919.
[78] *Årsbok,* 1922–1923, p. 24.
[79] *Årsbok,* 1932–1933, pp. 29, 48.

foreign missions, both by local churches and by means of combined efforts of various agencies, constituted, under God, definite creative factors which prepared the way for the great advance in 1944. That year saw the birth of The Foreign Missionary Advance movement within the General Conference, which presented a tremendous challenge to Conference Baptists and has already yielded a rich Kingdom harvest. More about that is recorded in a later chapter.

AN ENLARGED HOME MISSIONS FRONT

As previously recorded, home missions was the first born child of the General Conference. However, for many years, or until missionary work was started in Canada in 1905, it had been limited to some feeble efforts in the mountain states and in Texas. But when the General Conference launched out into independent school work, it became an unmistakable signal from heaven to march ahead on other fronts also.

The first opportunity presented itself in 1917 when the small Conference church in Detroit, Michigan appealed to the General Conference for financial aid in the amount of \$700.[80] By granting the appeal a broader missionary policy than heretofore was adopted. Formerly, aid of the General Conference had been limited to such missionary fields as could not be supervised by state or district conferences. The new procedure provided that the Conference could come to the assistance of any church, regardless of its location, that might be in need of financial support when such action seemed desirable, and when it met with the approval of the state conference concerned. In accordance with this revised policy, missionary pastors were engaged in Upper and Lower Michigan, in the Middle East Conference, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Montana, Colorado, Oregon and other states. General missionaries and evangelists were appointed from time to time as itinerant representatives of the missionary spirit of the denomination. In 1926 it was reported that not less than thirty pastors and missionary workers were supported in whole or in part by the General Conference.[81] The number of such ministers of the gospel had increased to over fifty by 1951, exclusive of Canada and Alaska. The increase in contributions to the General Conference home missions is no less encouraging. The expenses in 1927 amounted to approximately \$25,000.[82] To the annual meeting of the Conference in 1951 a home missions budget of \$144,500 was submitted and approved.

---

[80] *Årsbok,* 1917–1918, p. 26

[81] *Årsbok,* 1926–1927, p. 31.

[82] *Årsbok,* 1926–1927, p. 32.

This included $25,000 for the Alaska Mission which was started in 1947 and is sponsored by the National Brotherhood.

Moreover, the growth in the number of churches affiliated with the General Conference is a fact indicative of much divine blessing. In 1944 the number of churches listed was 288. Seven years later the total number had reached 357. The greatest increase was in California. In the course of years the Home Missions department also enlarged its borders to include, in a more or less intimate way, the Bible School and Young People's work, activities of the women and the men, World Relief, and God's Invasion Army. See later chapters for a more complete treatment of these agencies.

MISSION SECRETARIES

After G. Arvid Hagstrom in the fall of 1909 closed his service as the first mission secretary of the General Conference, the office was allowed to remain vacant for a number of years. A decade later, however, the need for definite missionary leadership reasserted itself. That need was expressed in the form of a recommendation by a survey commission. "The Committee of Twenty-one," appointed in 1919, whose main object was to investigate every department of the Conference program and bring in recommendations as to such changes as might be desirable and necessary.[83] The principal change, no doubt, as recommended by that survey commission to the Conference in Worcester, Massachusetts in 1920, was the creation of the office of a General or Mission Secretary. The duties of that office involved the promotion of all the interests of the General Conference, but particularly the direct missionary interest of the Conference. Olof Hedeen was elected and served in the capacity of Mission Secretary for nearly ten years. His was a life rich in Christian experience both as a pastor, in Brooklyn and Emerald Avenue, Chicago, and for eighteen years as teacher in the Theological Seminary, Morgan Park. With a clear vision of the needs and with a warm interest in missions, Hedeen made valuable and permanent contributions to the soul winning efforts of the entire denomination. Home missions in particular experienced a healthy growth under his leadership.

The second survey was made by a committee of eleven members which was appointed in 1929 and gave its report in a lengthy and comprehensive document in St. Paul, Minnesota, in 1930.[84] Its acceptance led to several important steps. One of them was the creation of a committee on Promotion and Finance, together with the office of a Secretary of Promotion and Finance with whom the committee was to cooperate in his promotional service. The scope of the power and program of this committee was never clearly understood or defined, and probably that is the main reason for the short life of the committee as such. For after only three years, at the Conference in Chicago, 1933, it gave its final report and was merged with the Executive Committee.[85] Olof Hedeen, who had served as Mission Secretary for ten years and had now reached the age of seventy, was retired on pension, and G. Arvid Hagstrom was elected to serve as Secretary of Promotion and Finance, his office to embody that of Mission Secretary. This responsible office was added to that of President of Bethel Institute, which he was to retain. It is quite certain that no duties comparable to those now laid on Hagstrom's shoulders have ever been placed on any one man in the history of the Swedish Baptist denomination.[86] Three years later, in 1933, he terminated his work as Secretary of Finance and Promotion, again to devote all of his time to the School.

---

[83] Backlund, *Swedish Baptists in America,* p. 132.

[84] Ibid. p. 133.

At that same time, too, the consolidated budget was discontinued. That budget, including home missions and the school, had been in operation for some twelve years. Since it never had an enthusiastic response on the part of the people, it gradually out-lived its own usefulness and became largely nonproductive. The plan of direct appeals by each department was again put into effect.[87]

In January, 1935 Ragnar A. Arlander assumed the duties of Mission Secretary and continued in that capacity until 1945 when he reached the age of retirement. For some thirty-five years as pastor he had proved a wise and good leader with a keen interest in all denominational matters. The Home Missions Department made constructive progress under his excellent leadership, and his personal and friendly appeal, both in "The Standard" and by means of private correspondence, greatly increased the interest in the missionary work of the General Conference. His successor in the office, William Turnwall, continued the service with youthful enthusiasm, and has had the joy of seeing the work grow and expand to really large dimensions.

THE SEVENTY-FIFTH JUBILEE

As previously recorded, the Fiftieth Jubilee in 1902, commemorating fifty years of Swedish Baptist work in America, made a profound impression upon the entire denomination. It became a clarion call to Swedish Baptists to enlarge the place of their tent and attempt greater things for God, and by His grace they marched ahead. The period between 1902 and 1927 was an era of great achievement along many lines, and not least in stewardship and missionary endeavors. In the year closing with the Fiftieth Jubilee in 1902, Swedish Baptists gave to the Lord's work, including local expense and missions, a grand total of $267,729.55. By 1926, the year preceding the Seventy-fifth Jubilee, the amount of contributions had reached the neat sum of $1,234,074.51. This is a remarkable fact and deserves recording for coming generations, especially as one remembers that Swedish Baptist churches were all founded by poor immigrants. Of the grand total of contributions in 1926 it is encouraging to note that $43,143.49 was given to foreign missions; to American home missions, $26,038.43; to Swedish state conferences $27,366.11; to the General Conference $52,924.40; and to charities and other benevolent objects, $66,580.18. The membership, on the other hand, in the quarter of a century, 1902–1927, had increased from 21,769 in 324 churches in 1902 to 33,830 members in 333 churches in 1927.[88]

---

[85] *Annual,* Swedish Baptist Churches of America, 1933–1934, Part 1, pp. 31, 33.

[86] Backlund, op. cit., p. 134.

[87] *Annual,* 1933–1934, Part 1, p. 35.

It seemed quite natural that Chicago again should be the meeting place for the second great celebration in Swedish Baptist history. Preceded by the annual meeting of the General Conference, which was held in the Addison Street Church, the Seventy-fifth Jubilee services were held in the Moody Memorial Church, with a seating capacity of 4,040, August 25–28, 1927. At practically every session the large auditorium was packed. That was especially true of the Sunday afternoon service, when even standing room was at a premium, as the largest company of Swedish Baptists ever assembled in one place celebrated the Lord's Supper.[89] A good jubilee program had been arranged, and the various messages were uniformly of a high order. In the large company, including 2,225 registered delegates, who had come from all parts of the United States, as well as some representatives from the Baptists of Sweden, there were two men who, in a sense, were the guests of honor. The first one was Carl Gustaf Lagergren, who had served as dean of the Theological Seminary for thirty-three years, and who, at the Jubilee, had reached the ripe old age of eight-one. He preached the Jubilee sermon from Rom. 11:33–36, stressing chiefly its closing words — "To whom be glory for ever."

The second "grand old man" was the missionary statesman Frank

---

[88] *Årsbok,* 1928–1929, p. 137.

[89] *Svenska Standaret,* Aug. 30, 1927., p. 6.

Peterson. His historical address Friday evening undoubtedly constituted the highest point of interest in the whole Jubilee celebration. Despite his eighty years, his clear and resonant voice penetrated into the most remote corner of the large auditorium, and the inspired speaker held his audience of over four thousand people spell-bound as he related dramatically, and yet very simply, the story of seventy-five years of Swedish Baptist work in the United States.[90] He traced that story back to its very beginning in Rock Island, Illinois, when Gustaf Palmquist, on August 8, 1852, immersed three believers who five days later formed the first Swedish Baptist church of America. Deeply moved the beloved veteran speaker said:

> This year marks our Seventy-fifth anniversary, and the occasion carries me back in memory to a scene on the banks of the Mississippi river of which, when a mere boy, I was an eye-witness. It was then that the sacred rite of baptism by immersion was administered by Gustaf Palmquist, for the first time in America, to a few Swedish immigrants, who had recently arrived to make their home in the new world. The occasion is made solemnly impressive to me for the reason that, as far as I know, I am the only one left of that motley company of onlookers to tell the story of that historic event.[91]

At the close of Frank Peterson's stirring address the leader of the service, G. Arvid Hagstrom, being the spiritual son of Frank Peterson, called to the platform all those present who had been members of the denomination fifty-five years or more. A remarkably large company, many of them bent with years and with feeble steps, made their way to the front of the church, as the large audience arose and praised God, in prayer and song, for the life and labor of the pioneers.

Another high point in the celebrations was the report on the Jubilee offering on Sunday afternoon. Due, to a very large extent, to the organizing ability and incessant labors of President Hagstrom, who two years previously had been chosen leader of the Jubilee Campaign, as well as to the willing response of many churches and individuals, it was possible to report receipts, in cash and pledges, amounting to $151,952.63. The Jubilee came to a close in a solemn and heart-searching Communion service, commemorating the Redeemer's death on Calvary.[92]

---

[90] *Svenska Standaret,* Aug. 30, 1927, p. 6. *Årsbok,* 1927–1928, pp. 21–25| See also *Jubileumsboken,* which contains all the addresses and transactions of the Seventy-fifth Jubilee, 1927.

[91] *Jubileumsboken,* op. cit., p. 64.

[92] *Svenska Standaret,* Aug. 30, 1927, p. 6.

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Within the framework of the General Conference several other organizations have operated from time to time. Some of these will be treated at length in later chapters. In this connection, however, it seems proper to make a brief mention of the Swedish Baptist Ministers' Pension and Aid Association which was organized and incorporated in 1905. The origin of this commendable project can be traced to Iowa where the Swedish Baptist ministers some time previously had started a Ministers' Aid Association. At the General Conference in Kansas City, Missouri, September 7–9, 1904, the ministers were authorized to reorganize the Iowa Association on a broader basis, to include not only direct aid to preachers in financial need but also to provide for pensions.[93] In that very worthy undertaking the Swedish Baptists were several years ahead of the American Baptists. And yet, it certainly was not too early. For several of the older ministers, including the noble founder of the Seminary, J. A. Edgren, had to spend their declining years in great economic distress. Later on, however, when the Northern Baptist Convention offered a better plan through the Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board, it was decided in 1927 to merge the funds of the Swedish Association with those of the M. and M. Board, and then disband.

Another important organization and branch of the General Conference work is the Historical Society. Fortunately there were a few — and their number has always been small — Swedish Baptists, both preachers and laymen, who even in the early decades took an active interest in denominational history. Christopher Silene, A. P. Ekman, and L. J. Ahlstrom belong to that group. The first organized attempt in that direction was made at the Conference held at Oakland, Nebraska, in the fall of 1892, when a historical committee was elected composed of Frank Peterson, O. Hedeen, Eric Sandell, Nils Olson, and C. Sandvall. The duty of that committee was to collect material pertaining to Swedish Baptist history, and to cause such a history to be published in the near future.[94] Apparently nothing definite was accomplished by that committee. For, six years later, at the Conference in 1898, C. G. Lagergren proposed the appointment of a new committee, composed of three members, to be charged with the responsibility of preparing a Swedish Baptist history for the Fiftieth Jubilee in 1902.[95] C. G. Lagergren, Frank Peterson, and Christopher Silene were elected

[93] *Årsbok,* 1904–1905, p. 40; 1905–1906, pp. 37–38.

[94] *Årsbok,* 1892, p. 9.

[95] *Årsbok,* 1898, p. 12.

to constitute the new historical committee. From that time the historical committee, being enlarged in its membership from time to time, has functioned with considerable success as a permanent organization of the General Conference. In order to interest more people in Swedish Baptist history the committee gave way, in 1937, to the Historical Society with a membership open to any Conference Baptist.

It was a disappointment, no doubt, that the proposed denominational history failed to appear in 1902. There may be two reasons for that. In the first place, the committee had not realized what a slow and painstaking task it was to collect source material and write a history that would adequately treat the work of the denomination. Secondly, about that time, at the turn of the century, A. G. Hall of his own accord had prepared and published a rather complete history of Swedish Baptists in two volumes, the first volume dealing with Baptists in Sweden, and the second volume with Swedish Baptists in America.

Fortunately, however, the historical committee refused to be discouraged, but continued throughout the years, in a quiet and yet effective way, to collect valuable source material. C. G. Lagergren and Emanuel Schmidt were the most active pioneers in that field. For many years Lagergren served as chairman of the Historical Committee, and Schmidt as secretary. After the reorganization into a historical society, J. E. Klingberg became the first president, and the author of this work, as secretary for the last thirty years, has succeeded in collecting a vast amount of Swedish Baptist historical source material. In the nineteen thirties a retired Conference minister by the name of Eric Berg, who had a keen interest in denominational history and an unusual knack for discovering source matter, traveled up and down the country, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, visiting practically every Conference Baptist church, and brought home to the historical archives at the Seminary in St. Paul hundreds of valuable historical documents.

The discovery of such documents sometimes appeared to be purely accidental, and yet, nevetheless, to be sure, very providential in nature and consequence. Such was the experience of C. G. Lagergren during a visit to Village Creek, Iowa, the year 1900. In his own words:

> In a side room (of the church) there stood in a corner an old box which appeared strange and peculiar. I asked the pastor if I might open the box. "Certainly," he replied, "it contains only pieces of cloth and sewing material for the ladies' sewing society." What did I find? Buried deep in the old box among all kinds of sewing articles, there was a treasure of old documents. One by one I picked them up, and brought to the light

the original minutes of the Illinois-Iowa Conference of 1862, 1863, 1865, 1866, 1867, 1868, 1869 and 1872, covering eight years. Then I told the pastor: "In the capacity of chairman of the historical committee I lay claim to these documents, which from a historical point of view are worth many times their weight in gold." "All right," he replied, "I did not know they were there."[96]

The work of the Historical Society throughout the years has yielded a rich harvest. For the archives contain several thousand separate pieces of source material, both in printed and manuscript form, such as biographies, histories of local churches, conferences and other institutions, conference annuals, church record books, letters, diaries, etc. Not least important in that collection is a complete set of the leading denominational papers and journals from 1871 to present times.

A REVISED CONSTITUTION

It is evident that the basic objective of the General Conference, as stated in its first constitution of 1880, has always been, in accordance with the Master's commission in Matt. 28:18–20, to go and make disciples in all nations. Included in that work are not only the direct preaching of the gospel at home and abroad but also the preparation and distribution of Christian literature, the education of young people for the missionary task, and the encouragement of benevolent and charitable institutions. As the Conference has enlarged its boundaries for service, it has become necessary to revise the constitution from time to time. The most recent change took place in 1945, with some minor additions in 1949. Among other reasons, the advance in foreign missions made by the Conference in 1945 called for a revised constitution.

As previously recorded, since 1914 the General Conference functioned primarily through three committees, each composed of twenty-one members, namely, a committee on missions, a committee on literature, and a committee on education, all of them together constituting the board of trustees of the Conference. Several years later a young people's and Bible school commission and a woman's commission were added, both of which operated in conjunction with the mission committee. In the revised constitution of 1945 the word "board" was substituted for "committee" and "commission," and the distinctly missionary work of the Conference was delegated to two separate boards, one for home missions and one for foreign missions. The number of members on each of the four main boards was reduced from twenty-one to fifteen, and the term of service increased from three to five years, with one year of ineligibility after each term. To summarize, the entire General Conference board is composed of departmental boards as follows: a board of home missions, a board of foreign missions, a board of education, and a board of publication, each of which has fifteen members. Then there are three subsidiary boards: a board of Bible school and young people's work, a board of women's work, and a board of men's work, each having ten members. The responsibility for the corporate and general affairs of the Conference is vested in a board of trustees which consists of fourteen members, two members from each of the four main boards, one member from each of the three subsidiary boards,[97] and three members at large.

---

[96] C. G. Lagergren, *Efter Sjuttio År* (1852–1922), p. 39.

---

[97] For a detailed account see *Annual,* Baptist General Conference of America, for 1949–1950, pp. 5–24, and other Annuals.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

STATE AND DISTRICT CONFERENCES

In Chapter Ten the story is told of the first conference of Swedish Baptists in America which met in Rock Island, Illinois, June 20–25, 1856. In reality it was a tri-state conference, with delegates from Illinois, Iowa, and Minnesota, which three states were the only ones where Swedish Baptist churches had been planted up to that time. The origin of state conferences can be traced, either directly, or indirectly, to that meeting in Rock Island, and after a few years the tri-state conference developed into three distinct state conferences in Minnesota, Iowa, and Illinois. At least two reasons can be stated for the division into regional conferences. In the first place, the long distances and lack of facilities of travel made a general conference difficult to realize in those pioneer days. Secondly, the deep feeling of responsibility for one's unsaved neighbor in the frontier settlements made united and concentrated missionary efforts in a smaller area very necessary. The state and district conference seemed to be God's chosen agency through which the local churches might spread the gospel light in their respective territories. The object of this chapter shall be to give a brief account of the missionary advance in each one of the fifteen state or district conferences, including Canada.

THE MINNESOTA CONFERENCE

The Minnesota Conference, the earliest of the state conferences with an independent existence, owes its origin to a meeting held in Scandia, September 20–21, 1858, (See Chapter Ten). Apparently no business was transacted, and no conference really organized in the strict sense of that word. It was a meeting of a theological and inspirational nature ("uppbyggelsemöte"). In the preaching at that rally F. O. Nilsson, who was pastor of the Scandia church, was assisted by A. Norelius, pastor of the church at Wastedo. Some friends from near by Carver also attended the services. Thus it is clear that only three — Wastedo, Carver and Scandia — of the five Minnesota churches[1] were represented in the Scandia rally September 20–21, 1858. However, it is safe to assume, even though reliable sources are lacking, that the Scandia meeting of 1858 became the starting point for an organized conference in Minnesota a few years later.

---

[1] The five Minnesota churches in existence 1858 were: Chisago Lake, Houston, Scandia, Wastedo and Carver, with a combined membership of 157.

As has been repeatedly stated in this story, the basic reason and the main objective for all conferences is missions — to make disciples and thus enlarge the kingdom of God upon earth. More specifically, in regard to state conferences and in the early days when the Swedish language was used, the object was to do missionary work among the Swedes in the respective states or districts. That work was twofold, both direct evangelism and assisting the smaller churches until they would become self-supporting. For several reasons, the progress in the pioneer days was slow and involved much sacrifice and hard work. In the first place, the Swedish population was small and scattered over a wide area in the deep forests and on the trackless prairies. Then, too, the preachers were few, and practically all of them had to work hard with their own hands during the week to support themselves and their families. Moreover, there was a determined opposition from another denomination, which, by reason of the state church background in Sweden, seemed to claim as their own all Swedes in America.

But God had started the work, and with His blessing it was bound to succeed. Some statistics may be of interest here. As stated above, in 1858 there were five churches in Minnesota with a combined membership of 157; in 1874, there were 22 churches with 675 members; in 1882 the number of churches had reacher 32, with 1,700 members; and in 1888 the Swedish Baptists in Minnesota numbered 3,136.[2] When the Minnesota Conference was fifty years old, in 1908, there were 89 churches and 6,556 members, and in 1951 there were 111 churches with a combined membership of 12,996.[3]

Space will not permit our giving a detailed account of the onward march of missions within each area. However, by a brief presentation of some of the many agencies used by the Lord of the harvest to gather in the harvest, it will be possible to give a reasonably adequate picture of the achievements and progress. First and foremost among the missionary factors are the local pastors and the local churches. Practically all the preachers in the era of the pioneers were missionary pastors who were not content to limit their service to their own church and community. Like the Master of old, they felt that inner urge to preach the gospel in the next towns, and like Paul "in journeyings

[2] *Evangelisten,* 1874, p. 171. *Evangelisk Tidskrift* 1882, pp. 54, 150. *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Sept. 26, 1888, p. 4.

[3] *Annual.* General Conference 1951–1952, p. 150.

often" they pressed on and made converts and organized churches in many of the Swedish settlements on the frontier. Such was F. O. Nilsson, the founder of Swedish Baptist work in Minnesota, and his immediate disciples, the lay preachers John Anderson, John Erickson, John A. Peterson, and many others. In their missionary endeavors the pastors were whole-heartedly supported by the rank and file of the membership in the pioneer churches, especially through prayer interest, even though in their poverty they had not much to share, by way of financial aid.

It was fortunate for the early Swedish Baptist churches, all composed of poor immigrants, that the older denomination, the American Baptists, realized their missionary opportunity among the foreign language groups of America. Thus it came about that Swedish Baptists for the first fifty years or more had a very intimate relationship with the so called National Missionary Societies of the American Baptists, namely the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, the American Baptist Publication Society, and the American Baptist Home Mission Society, as well as with the local State Conventions in some areas. That was the case in Minnesota, where, in the early years, the American Baptist State Convention returned for Swedish work in the state three dollars for every dollar contributed by the Swedish churches. Later that amount was reduced to two dollars, and then to one dollar, and finally a small nominal sum as a token love gift to the Swedish Conference.[4] Practically all Swedish churches received some financial help in the early years of their history, and in most cases such assistance came from the American Baptist Home Mission Society through State Convention offices. That generous missionary support was applied to salaries for pastors and missionaries as well as new church buildings in form of so called gift loans, all of which greatly accelerated the evangelizing of Swedes in America and the building of Swedish Baptist churches.

By no means, however, was it a one-sided affair, with American Baptists always giving and the Swedish Baptists constantly on the receiving end. For, in addition to the purely spiritual compensation which is always inherent in missionary service, the American Baptists reaped a threefold harvest from their investments in Swedish Baptist work. In the first place, the Swedish churches throughout the years returned to American Baptist home and foreign missions considerable sums of money, probably equal to, if not exceeding, the amount received. Secondly, the Swedish churches have supplied the State

---

[4] Ryden, *Svenska Baptisterna i Minnesota,* op. cit., p. 90.

Convention churches, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, with a steady stream of good members, amounting undoubtedly, in the course of years, to many thousands of active and consecrated Christians. Thirdly, it has been the privilege of Swedish Baptists to give nearly one hundred of their sons and daughters as foreign missionaries to the service of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society. These missionaries, too, have been of the highest order, especially as successful soul winners in their respective fields.

By 1925 the time had come when it was considered advisable for the Swedish Baptist Conference of Minnesota to become self-supporting and independent of the American Baptist State Convention. The following resolution was adopted at the annual meeting held in the Bethel church of Minneapolis, June 11–14, 1925:

> That in view of the fact of our increased numerical and financial strength and in order to arouse, if possible, in our churches a greater interest and sense of responsibility for the promotion of the gospel in the state of Minnesota, we decide to assume all the financial obligations for our work in the state and thus become wholly self-supporting.[5]

At that time the Swedish Baptists of Minnesota had 91 churches with a total membership of 8,975, and a missionary budget for the state of nearly ten thousand dollars.[6] Thus it was self-evident that the Conference was well able from every point of view to care for its own work. It had reached maturity and did not need the assistance of other missionary agencies. The friendly separation, too, proved to be for the furtherance of the gospel; only three years later, in 1928, the total membership had risen to 9,536 souls, and the contributions for state missions amounted to $13,156.85.[7]

There were heroes of faith, too, in that long line of noble missionaries and missionary pastors in Minnesota. Their number is too large to name them all here. However, it seems historically proper that a few of the oldtimers and such who had a longer term of service should have a place in this story. It is a significant fact that Minnesota and other states, including some of the smaller conferences, in the early part of their history and up to the last thirty years, or so, had several full time missionaries, varying in number from two to six, serving at the same time. That does not include missionary pastors who were supported in part by the Conference. Thus, for example, in 1903 there labored on the Minnesota field 14 missionary pastors, three district missionaries, one general Sunday school missionary, and two colporteurs.[8] The result was expansion and growth in the form of new fields and new churches. The present generation should learn a lesson and send out more state missionaries.

---

[5] *Årsbok,* Svenska Baptisternas i Minnesota Konferens 1925, p. 43.

[6] Ibid., pp. 37, 42.

[7] *Årsbok,* Svenska Baptisternas i Minnesota Konferens, 1928, pp. 33, 38.

In the vanguard there is the intrepid and aggressive "break-plow" missionary, Olaus Okerson, whose story is told in Ch. Fifteen. From 1865 to 1879 he traveled incessantly far and wide in Minnesota as an evangelist and organizer of new churches. The indomitable John Ongman (Ch. Fifteen) belongs to the same period, and his field was mainly Isanti County, where he labored with much success from 1868 to 1873. Olof Bodien, whose story is also related in Ch. Fifteen, became the forerunner in the Sunday School field.[9] His four years of labor as Sunday school missionary, 1883–1887, brought the importance of the Sunday school to the attention, as never before, of Swedish Baptists of Minnesota.

Four Missionaries

At least four missionaries in Minnesota distinguished themselves by unusually long terms of service. First, in order of time, was the kind and congenial Sunday school missionary "Uncle Westin," as he was lovingly called. C. E. Westin was born at Torp in the province of Medelpad, Sweden, July 11, 1846. After his conversion at eighteen, Westin began to witness for the Lord immediately, and found much delight in working among the children in the Sunday school. Having emigrated to America in 1870, and located in Isanti County two years later, he became a pillar in the North Isanti church. The Lord, however, had a wider field of service prepared for His faithful servant. In 1892 Westin was sent out as Sunday school missionary and colporteur with northeastern Minnesota as his field. There he labored faithfully for some twenty-three years, or until 1915. The children loved "Uncle Westin" and looked forward with delight to his visits, and the parents gladly opened their doors to share, often in great poverty, the limited space in their cabin and the meagre meal with the kind-hearted missionary. In this they were never disappointed for they reaped rich returns. For "Uncle Westin" brought heavenly sunshine to young and old and pointed many little boys and girls to the great Friend of children. He fell asleep in Jesus October 7, 1925.[10]

---

[8] *Årsbok,* Svenska Baptistförsamlingarna i Amerika, 1903–1900, p. 26.

[9] Sunday school missionaries, youth directors and colporteurs were usually supported, at least in part, by the American Baptist Publication Society.

[10] *Årsbok.* Svenska Baptistförsamlingarna i Amerika, 1926–1927, pp. 87–88.

The pioneers realized the great importance of the Sunday school, and for a long time practically every state conference had at least one, and often more than one, Sunday school missionary, whose duties were twofold: to strengthen existing Sunday schools and to organize new ones. Generally, such missionaries were supported by Sunday school societies operating within the framework of the respective state conferences, with financial aid from the American Baptist Publication Society. Magnus Berglund's term as general Sunday school missionary in Minnesota nearly equalled, in length, that of Westin. For it was his privilege to give twenty years of his life, 1899–1919, to the gospel work among children. Like Westin, he was eminently qualified as a Sunday school missionary, especially by reason of his optimistic and sunny disposition. In the large city Sunday schools as well as in the rural areas and the pioneer districts the visits by Magnus Berglund became really outstanding events, and many boys and girls surrendered to Christ under his preaching and teaching.[11]

G. R. Anderson of Alexandria was a typical pioneer and frontier missionary. He served in that capacity for some eighteen years, 1908–1925, with his field mainly in the northern part of the state. Adding seven more years as missionary pastor in the Jessie Lake and Battle River area in the north, Anderson had a record of twenty-five years in the service of the Minnesota Conference, years filled with an abundance of labor and heroic sacrifice. Often the missionary had to walk from ten to twenty miles a day in order to reach the appointed place for the service, and his sleeping quarters varied from the hay loft to the primitive log cabin of some poor pioneer. The spiritual returns, however, were very gratifying. The new settlers on the frontier, sensing in their deep poverty their desperate need of help from both God and man, responded more eagerly to the gospel message than the people in the older communities whose hearts had become hardened in the pursuit of material wealth. Thus it was the missionary's joy to see many turn from darkness to light, and to have a part in the organization of eleven or twelve new churches.[12] Anderson was called to his rest April 2, 1951.

In heroic work and unselfish sacrifice, the northern Minnesota missionary Albert D. Grant has few equals. Being a faithful and active member in the Isanti North church and getting his living from a small farm in that area, he made missionary journeys for many years, chiefly in the winter time, to the northern parts of the state. The counties of Itasca, Beltrami, and Koochiching, an area of about one hundred miles in either direction, he crossed on foot time and again. Walking through forests, brush, and swamps, where few roads had been opened, the missionary, sometimes utterly exhausted and with bleeding feet, would find his way to some lonely habitation in the backwoods. Here he was a welcome guest, and soon the neighbors would gather to hear the story of redemption proclaimed in love and practical simplicity. He truly became all things to all men that by all means he might save some. It was a gospel of helpfulness and unselfish service that Albert Grant proclaimed. Whether he helped the farmer to milk the cows, or whether he repaired the old Ford, the pump or the sewing machine for the pioneers, or whether he entertained the children by playing gospel hymns on his suitcase phonograph, or whether he brought loads of clothes to the poor and the needy — the aim was always to glorify Christ and win souls for Him. After several years of self supporting missionary labor, Grant was engaged, in 1919, as the missionary of the Minnesota Young People's Union with an annual salary of four hundred dollars. That amount was after some years increased by a few hundred dollars and a Ford. By 1933 both the missionary and his second Ford were practically worn out. He continued, however, to preach a few years more in Jessie Lake.[13]

---

[11] *Årsbok,* 1931–1932, pp. 100–101.

[12] Anderson's annual reports in the Annuals of the Minnesota Conference, 1908–1925, make interesting reading.

One of the most aggressive and indefatigable workers in Minnesota, and for that matter in the whole General Conference, was C. E. Wallendorf. He served as Sunday school and Young People's missionary in Minnesota 1919–1926. In the field of Christian education Wallendorf really was a pioneer, for he realized not only the need of direct evangelism and soul winning, which the old-timers so nobly had stressed, but he also grasped the great importance of Christian training both for the child and the teacher. Thus he encouraged and promoted vigorously Daily Vacation Bible Schools, which at that time were a rather recent movement, as well as other forms of religious child training. For the teachers he was equally concerned. He arranged teachers' training institutes all over the state, and also wrote "The Graded Bible Teacher" of the Uniform lessons, which was published by the Baptist Conference Press and which was considered one of the best lesson helps of its kind. The Minnesota Young People's Union, organized in 1907, also received a new stimulus under Wallendorf's aggressive and wise leadership. His crowning effort in that field, no doubt, was the launching of the Summer Assembly work, which at that time was practically new in the denomination. The first session was held, under Wallendorf's leadership, at Bethel Seminary in June, 1925.[14]

---

[13] *Årsbok,* Svenska Baptisternas i Minnesota Konferens, 1919, pp. 30, 42–43; 1920, pp. 41–43; 1926, pp. 36–39; 1933–1934, p. 12.

With some exceptions, during the last twenty years the Minnesota Conference has had only one missionary in the field at one time, and he has also served in the capacity of corresponding and executive secretary. There should have been several general workers in order adequately to meet the challenging opportunities. However, the work is well organized, with a strong Young People's Union and an effective Assembly and Bible Camp program, an active Women's Union organized in 1935, and a more recent Brotherhood organization.[15] The budget adopted for missions in Minnesota for 1950-1951 is a challenging one, and includes $12,825 for the General Fund, $12,840 for Church aid, and $10,000 for Big Trout Lake Bible Camp, making a total of $35,665.[16]

THE ILLINOIS CONFERENCE

As previously recorded (Chapter Ten), the three state conferences of Illinois, Iowa, and Minnesota all have their roots in the tri-state, or general conference, that was organized in Rock Island, Illinois June 1856. Minnesota was the first to organize an independent state conference, which took place in 1858. This left the churches in Illinois and Iowa by themselves, and at the annual meeting held at Village Creek, Iowa, June 16–18, 1864, it was decided to organize the Illinois-Iowa Conference. In 1872 the churches in the western part of Iowa united themselves into a conference with the churches in Nebraska, known as the Western Iowa and Nebraska Conference. Finally, in 1883, all the churches of Iowa formed a conference of their own with the result that from that time there existed three independent and separate state conferences, namely Illinois, Iowa, and Nebraska. The question as to which of the three dates, 1856, 1864 or 1883, should be considered the real and correct origin of the Illinois Conference aroused considerable controversy in the summer of 1898.[17] By common consent, as it were, the good Baptists in Illinois preferred to make their conference as old as possible, and the year 1856 was agreed on as the starting point.

---

[14] See Wallendorf's reports in the Minnesota Annuals, 1919–1926.

[15] The Youth Work, and Women's and Men's Activities will be treated in a later chapter.

[16] Missions in Minnesota, Sept.–Oct., 1950, p. 3.

[17] For a more complete discussion of the problem see Chapter Ten. Also *Nya Wecko-Posten,* July 13, 1898, p. 4.

In Illinois, as in other areas, the pioneer preachers were all missionary pastors. Gustaf Palmquist, the founder and organizer of the first Swedish Baptist church in America, Rock Island, Illinois, 1852, was constantly moving about to tell the gospel story in western Illinois, Chicago, and New York. Others took up the good work after he returned to Sweden in 1857. However, the preachers — all lay preachers in the early years — were very few, at least for the first twenty years. Olof Lindh claims that in 1871 he was the only Swedish Baptist preacher in all of Illinois and Iowa, with six churches to care for.[18] As far as is known, Lindh, too, became the first duly elected missionary of the Illinois-Iowa Conference. He was called to that work at the annual meeting of the Conference in Altona, Illinois, 1868.[19] His experiences as pioneer missionary in western Illinois and Iowa make fascinating reading, for they make a story of spiritual ground breaking rich in both humor and pathos as well as in much sacrifice and glorious victory. But his term of service as missionary lasted only one year.

Then there was a long break in the succession of missionaries in Illinois, which continued for some twenty years, or up to the early nineties. Nevertheless, that period witnessed some remarkable progress, primarily in the rapidly growing city of Chicago. The following statistics are indicative of God's favor upon the work: In 1870 Illinois had four Swedish Baptist churches with a total membership of 324; in 1882 there were 12 churches having a combined membership of 900; and eight years later, in 1890, the churches numbered 24, and the total membership 2,091.[20] As one is searching for the purely human factors which the Lord of the harvest used in promoting the Baptist cause in Illinois, among many others at least two can be mentioned. In the first place, there was the great Swedish immigration, especially in the eighteen-eighties, which made Chicago the largest Swedish center in America. As a result of such an extraordinary influx of Swedes, not forgetting, of course, the distinctly divine factor in the form of periodic revivals, there was a rapid increase in the number of churches in the same period. In the years 1880–1892 not less than 18 new churches were formed in the Illinois Conference, many of which are today among the largest and most active in the entire denomination. The second creative factor in the growth of the Illinois churches was the Theological Seminary located in Chicago, and later in Morgan Park. From the very beginning in 1871, when Edgren started his seminary, the students were actively engaged in the preaching of the gospel, and it is safe to say that they had a vital share, for some forty years, in the formation of practically every church in the Illinois area, and more particularly in the metropolitan center of Chicago.

---

[18] Lindh, *Minnen,* op. cit., p. 77.

[19] Ibid., p. 67. See also *Evangelisten,* 1869, pp. 29–31.

[20] *Evangelisten,* 1870, p. 141. *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* 1883, p. 7. *Statistik* för Svenska Baptistförsamlingarna i Nord Amerikas Förenta Stater, 1890–1891, p. 25.

Swedish Baptists in Illinois received a great boost when the Illinois Sunday School Union was organized October 21, 1892.[21] G. Arvid Hagstrom, at that time only twenty-five years of age, became the Union's first missionary. With a native talent for creative leadership and organization, a great capacity for productive work, and with a contagious interest in children, he succeeded in stimulating churches and Sunday schools to launch out into the deep in their work for children. Child evangelism, which sixty years ago was not much encouraged in the churches, received special attention, and the missionary rejoiced in seeing many boys and girls turn to Christ as their personal Savior. Training institutes for Sunday school teachers, at that time practically a new thing, too, were held, eight of them during the first year of Hagstrom's service. Moreover, as a result of his influence and that of others in the Illinois Sunday School Union, the American Baptist Publication Society was induced to start publishing a Sunday school paper in Swedish, "Barnens Tidning" (Children's News),[22] as well as hymnals and other literature specifically for Swedish Baptist Sunday schools.

After three years of effective service Hagstrom was succeeded by E. J. Nordlander, who for five years, or until 1901, continued to build upon the good foundation already laid. In that year, 1901, Charles E. Palm joined the ranks of the Illinois Sunday School Union and served in the capacity of missionary for fifteen years. "Uncle Palm," as he was lovingly called, was probably the most successful Sunday school missionary within the fellowship of Swedish Baptists. When he passed away February 18, 1946, at the age of eighty-seven years, all who knew him felt that a truly good man, one in whom there was no guile, had been translated to be with his Lord. He had a great capacity for friendship, and all ages, including little children, were attracted to him. In his interests he included not only individual friends and churches whom he served, but the kingdom of God as a whole. Our own fellowship with its home and foreign missions and educational work — all had in "Uncle Palm" a warm friend and supporter. Moreover, a deep sense of humility permeated his whole personality.[23]

---

[21] Svenska Baptisternas i Illinois Söndagsskolförenings *Årsbok,* 1893–1894, pp. 8–9.

[22] *Söndagsskolföreningens Årsbok,* 1893–1894, p. 29; 1894–1895, pp. 8, 10–11. See also *Svenska Standaret,* Oct. 25, 1912, on Twenty Years of the Sunday School Union.

As a Sunday School missionary "Uncle Palm" not only made friends for the Sunday school and the cause of Christ in general, but he also projected and implemented a number of forward looking plans which have proved a great blessing in the whole denomination. The training of Sunday school teachers he considered of utmost importance, and he continued faithfully the teachers' institutes started by his predecessors. However, he felt that something more comprehensive was needed. Hence he said in one of his first reports to the Sunday School Union: "We ought to have a summer school in which we could combine study and recreation. Such a school would bring untold blessings to our work as a whole."[24] For several summers courses of a ten day period were arranged at Bethany Beach, with Eric Sandell, "Uncle Palm," and others as teachers. Not only Sunday school teachers and prospective teachers availed themselves of those opportunities, but also from the rank and file of church members in general, primarily young people, there were many who returned from the Bethany Beach training school better equipped for service. This was the forerunner of the modern Young People's Assembly movement, so richly blessed by God.[25]

Another project which "Uncle Palm" effectively sponsored was a Bible or colportage wagon for the Illinois field. In a comparatively short time Palm had raised the money,[26] and, in order to commemorate the name of the founder of Swedish Baptists, the wagon was named "the Palmquist Memorial Wagon." A similar wagon in memory of Anders Wiberg, that other great founder of Swedish Baptists, was purchased by the Baptists in Minnesota in 1902, with A. G. Sandblom as the first missionary to use it.[27] In Illinois the blind evangelist A. J. Freeman with his little daughter Esther gave the Palmquist Memorial Wagon its first trial. The wagon was quite a novelty and created a sensation wherever it went.

People came to see and hear. Some came to buy fish, for the

[23] *Annual,* Baptist General Conference of America, 1946–1947. Part 1, pp. 120–121.

[24] Svenska Baptisternas i Illinois *Årsbok* 1904, p. 36.

[25] See Illinois *Årsbok,* 1907, p. 35; 1908, p. 38.

[26] Illinois *Årsbok,* 1904, pp. 30, 34, 36. It is significant that in the list of contributors to the Colportage Wagon there is found the name of J. A. Edgren, the founder of the Seminary. In view of the fact that Edgren lived the last twenty years of his life with a broken health and in poverty, his gift of five dollars speaks forcefully of love and sacrifice and devotion. See also *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Aug. 23, 1904.

[27] *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Aug. 19, 1902, p. 5.

colportage wagon looked like a fish wagon. Others wanted medicine. Freeman told them he was a fisher of men and that the only medicine he had was balm from Gilead. The school children in the country districts crowded around and drank in the gospel of song and salvation. The boys crawled under "the church" and examined its foundation and gave bread to "the Bible horses."[28]

Later, when John Hedeen became missionary colporteur in Illinois, he used the Palmquist Memorial Wagon for several years and with much blessing. Hedeen's missionary labors in Illinois and northern Indiana are unique in several respects. In the first place, his term of service is undoubtedly the longest of any home missionary among Swedish Baptists, covering, as it did, thirty-six years, or from 1906 to 1942, when he had reached the ripe old age of eighty-two. In the second place, he was in a very definite sense a missionary of the Pauline type, who privately from house to house, and publicly proclaimed Christ in testimony and song. His frequent and interesting letters in "The Standard," with the general title "Från by till by" (From Village to Village) indicate that he was constantly busy contacting people with the gospel of redeeming love. His reports[29] to the Illinois Conference record annually 1,500 house to house visitations, or more, the distribution of thousands of tracts, as well as Bibles and other books, in addition to his preaching services in homes, school houses, and churches. They read like a chapter from "The Acts of the Apostles."

In the field of foreign missions, too, the Illinois Sunday School Union manifested considerable interest. For it was primarily the Sunday schools, and the young people's societies and some individuals, who provided O. L. Swanson of Assam, one of their own sons, with a gospel wagon. It makes a thrilling story, indeed, to read about the appearance of Swanson's gospel wagon in the bazaars and the tea gardens of Assam. It was in the year 1904. People crowded in upon him to inspect that strange contraption so that he seldom had room enough to stand by it, but usually took his place on one of its wide tired wheels from which he preached his sermon. The wagon proved to be a wonderful help in spreading the gospel on the plains of Assam.[30]

The very success, however, of the Sunday School Union, in the course of years, tended to create a kind of competition between the Union and the state Conference. Each organization had its own missionary; in fact, the Union had a missionary and a colporteur. Both organizations held their annual meetings at the same time and in the same place. The Conference came to be considered by some as stiff and conservative as compared to the active and enthusiastic Sunday School Union. It was therefore considered advisable to merge the two organizations, which took place in 1920. At that time the Conference adopted the policy of supporting missionary pastors in places where the churches were not able to support their own pastors, rather than having two or three general missionaries in the field.[31]

---

[28] Alfred E. Lindberg, *The Blind Evangel,* p. 33.

[29] See Annuals of The Illinois Conference, 1906–1942. See also *The Standard,* Aug. 26, 1949.

[30] Svenska Baptisternas i Illinois *Årsbok,* 1904, pp. 22–23. See also *In Villages and Tea Gardens* by O. L. Swanson, pp. 86–89.

Unlike Minnesota, the Swedish Baptists of Illinois never had any official affiliation with the American Baptist Convention of that state. However, there existed a friendly cooperation with the American Baptist Home Mission Society and the American Baptist Publication Society on much the same level as in other states. As regards the Home Mission Society, the cooperation came to an abrupt end in 1921. In that year the Society refused to continue small grants to a few small churches on the ground that these churches had been unable to contribute anything to the big money drive, the "One Hundred Million Dollars Drive," also known as the "New World Movement," sponsored by the Northern Baptist Convention 1919–1924.[32] The trial became a blessing in disguise both for the churches and the Conference, creating as it did a greater solidarity and interest in their own work. Later on the cooperation ceased also with the American Baptist Publication Society. The Conference had reached maturity!

The Illinois Young People's Union, organized in 1893, and for many years very active, was supplanted by the Chicago Young People's Union in 1917. Two years later another Young People's Union was organized in western Illinois. The Chicago Union of Baptist Women, since its formation in 1932, has added much to the progress of the Conference. With a total membership in 1951 of 6,666 in 33 churches, the Conference Baptists in Illinois can expect to attempt great things for God in years to come.

THE MID-ATLANTIC (EASTERN) CONFERENCE

The Mid-Atlantic Conference, originally known as "The Swedish Baptist Conference of the Eastern States," was organized February 11, 1883. It comprised, generally speaking, the whole northern area of the country east of Illinois and Michigan, but more specifically what is now covered by the New England, the Eastern and the Middle East Conferences. In 1899 the Conference was divided into the New England and the New York Conferences, the former to include all the churches in New England north of Connecticut. The New York Conference changed its name to the Eastern Conference in 1946 and later to the Mid-Atlantic Conference. In 1903 a second division took place, when the churches of Ohio, western Pennsylvania, and western New York separated themselves from the New York Conference to form an organization of their own to be known as the Middle East Conference.[33]

---

[31] Illinois *Årsbok,* 1930, p. 25.

[32] Svenska Baptisternas i Illinois *Årsbok* 1921, pp. 20–21.

The plan to organize a conference in the eastern states seems to have originated with the pioneer preacher Olof Lindh, at that time pastor in New York City. In the fall of 1882 he went to Boston to confer with Axel Tjernlund, pastor of the local Swedish Baptist church, and P. A. Englund of New Sweden, Maine, about the advisability of organizing a Swedish Baptist conference in the eastern states. The organization was effected February 11, 1883, in New Haven, Connecticut, by ten delegates who represented the following eight churches: New York, Bridgeport, New Haven, Boston, Worcester, Bridgewater, Providence, and New Sweden. During the first twenty-five years or more, considerable numerical growth was experienced. Thus, at the end of the first decade, in 1893, the records showed a membership of 2,054, in 21 churches, and six years later, when the Conference was divided into two, the number of churches had reached 36 with a combined membership of 3,499.[34] No doubt, a basic reason for the rapid growth in number was the large immigration from Sweden at that time. However, it is also evident that by means of gracious revivals in many of the churches God continually added such as were saved. Due primarily to the long distances between the churches, it was decided to divide the Conference into two separate bodies, which took place at Worcester, Massachusetts, July 29, 1899, when fourteen churches in the Northern area, with a membership of 1,578, withdrew and organized the New England Conference. The remaining 22 churches, having a membership of 1,921, reorganized and changed the name of the Swedish Baptist Conference of the Eastern States to the Swedish Baptist New York Conference. The division was made in a spirit of harmony and brotherly love. In 1903 the New York Conference suffered a new bleeding, when eleven churches with 601 members withdrew and organized what is now called the Middle East Conference.[35]

---

[33] J. E. Klingberg, *A Brief History of the Swedish Baptist New York Conference,* 1883–1933, pp. 8, 15, 17. See also *The Standard,* Feb. 25, 1949, pp. 1–2; Backlund, *Swedish Baptists,* p. 138, and Ekman, *Svenska Baptisternas i Östra Staterna Uppkomst.* (MS).

[34] Klingberg, op. cit., pp. 12, 15.

The Eastern area was blessed with several strong leaders and eloquent preachers, especially in the early years. To mention only a few, there was the quiet and thoughtful A. P. Ekman of New York, the brilliant scholar Olof Hedeen of Brooklyn, the wise and eloquent O. J. Engstrand, also of Brooklyn, and the profound expounder of the Word, Axel Tjernlund of Boston. Moreover, there were two others who over a long period of years made very productive and permanent contributions to Swedish Baptist work in the eastern states. The first of these was Olof Lindh, a man of enthusiasm and initiative, a great organizer who has been called "the high priest of the Eastern States, father of the New York Conference."[36] The other was the Sunday school missionary P. E. Engberg, known as "Uncle Engberg." Klingberg has well said:

"He (Lindh) was a master builder, and the material he selected was of a good and durable kind. Engberg comes close to him. Lindh brought into union and spiritual fellowship the older people, and Engberg, a man of softer clay, was successful in bringing together the children in the Sunday schools. Lindh tilled the acres of the farm, so to speak, and Engberg labored in the flower garden. Lindh could not have done what Engberg did, nor could Engberg have performed what Lindh did. All the earlier organizations are, with few exceptions, the work of these two men."[37]

OLOF LINDH

He was born in the province of Helsingland, northern Sweden, September 24, 1835. In spite of the influence of a godly father of the strict "läsare" type, Lindh felt he had to drink deeply of the pleasures of this world before he became willing to surrender his life to the Lord. His conversion took place at the age of twenty-four. A careful study of the New Testament with the object in view to reclaim his brother, who had become a Baptist, resulted in his own immersion, at midnight May 8, 1860. Most of the baptisms in those early years took place in the darkness of the night for fear of the mob and the state church which had sworn death to the Baptists.

In 1862 Lindh commenced to witness publicly for his Master, and the following year he was called to become pastor of the Baptist church at Hudiksvall in his home province, remaining there until 1866, when he emigrated to America.[38] Locating in Chicago he, together with others, became instrumental in organizing the First Swedish Baptist Church in the month of August 1866. The following year, Lindh began his long and productive career as pioneer preacher among the Swedish Baptists of America. After a year as pastor in Altona, Illinois, and another year as missionary in Illinois and Iowa, he moved to Moline, Illinois in 1870, where he remained for six years, and experienced a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit in a sweeping revival, (Chapter Five). Back in Sweden, 1876–1879, he traveled as evangelist in the province of Medelpad, in the northern part of the country, where literally hundreds turned to Christ under his preaching. The saying went forth, "The fire is burning everywhere" ("Det brinner över allt").[39]

---

[35] Ibid., p. 17.

[36] *The Standard,* Febr. 25, 1949, p. 1.

[37] Klingberg, op. cit., pp. 28–29.

However, the "America fever" gripped Olof Lindh again, and he returned to this country in 1879. Two years later he began the most productive era of his life as pastor, pioneer preacher ("banbrytare") and organizer of new churches in the eastern area. His first pastorate in the east was in New York City, where he saw the church grow from 65 members to about two hundred, with 92 members withdrawing to form a church in Brooklyn. For three years, 1888–1891, Lindh traveled as a missionary in the eastern states, after which he ministered as pastor to the churches at Bridgeport, Connecticut; Cambridge, Massachusetts; Concord, New Hampshire; and New Haven, Connecticut. But whether he served a local church as pastor or traveled as a missionary, Lindh was constantly reaching out to frontier territory. As a soul winner he experienced much success, and as an organizer of churches few, if any, in the whole General Conference, have surpassed him. Not less than 21 churches, three of them located in Illinois and eighteen in the eastern states, owe their origin, as far as organization is concerned, either directly or indirectly to Olof Lindh.[40] In the year 1900 he retired, but not to inactivity. He continued his preaching tours far and wide. On one of these he had reached Sioux City, Iowa, where he sat in the pastor's study with a pen in his hand when the summons invited him to rest from his labors and to be with his Lord. That was October 5, 1912.

---

[38] *Nya Wecko-Postens Kalender,* 1913, pp. 186–197. See also *Nya Wecko-Posten* Oct. 15, 1912; and *Svenska Standaret,* Oct. 25, 1912.

[39] *Kalender* 1913, op. cit., p. 191.

[40] For a list of these churches see his *Minnen,* op. cit., pp. 270–271.

P. E. ENGBERG

Petrus Engelbrekt Engberg, for twenty-seven years a Sunday school missionary in the eastern states, and after 1904 in the New York Conference, was born in Sundsvall, Sweden, October 3, 1847. He was a younger brother of Olof Engberg, pioneer preacher and organizer both in northern Sweden and in Minnesota. His father, too, was a great man of God and most likely the first Baptist in all of northern Sweden. The Baptist church in Sundsvall, being the first Baptist church in Norrland, was organized in his home, 1855. Moved by a restless spirit of adventure P. E. Engberg as a young man roamed around the world: Stockholm, Sweden; Hamburg, Bremen, Leipzig and other cities in Germany; New York and Newark in the United States; Montreal, Canada, and finally back to northern Sweden. Here, in the city of Hernösand, his restless soul found rest in God, January 15, 1876,[41] and a new era began in his life. He started immediately to bear witness for Christ, and after his baptism a few months later he was elected pastor of the local Baptist church.

In 1881 Engberg emigrated to America for the second time, this time to make our country his permanent home. Most of the time he lived in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Having been encouraged by many of his friends to devote all of his time to Sunday school work, he entered in through the providentially opened door on August 17, 1889, and gave to the eastern states a most remarkable service as a Sunday school missionary until his eyes closed in death September 26, 1916. For the first fifteen years his field was primarily the New England states. Like Olof Lindh he was a self-made man without any formal training for the ministry. Nevertheless, he proved to be God's man "for such a time as this," and in magnitude his work reached larger proportions than that of any other Sunday school missionary among Swedish Baptists. After the completion of twenty-five years of service, in his report to the New York Conference at Meriden, Connecticut, May 21–23, 1914, Engberg recorded some extraordinarily interesting figures. He had organized not less than 116 Sunday schools out of which there developed, or were formed, 30 active churches. His house to house visitations — and he made it a point to seek out lonely persons in distant and secluded places — amounted to 26,282, and in that same period of time he distributed 82,920 tracts, together with a large number of Bibles and other Christian literature.

---

[41] *Nya Wecko-Postens Kalender* 1917, pp. 120–133. See also *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Oct. 10, 1916; Oct. 17, 1916; Oct. 21, 1916; and Oct. 31, 1916.

Engberg was a sunny Christian with a loving and kind disposition. His deep solicitation for the welfare of children, and especially their salvation, left an indelible imprint upon them. His gentleness, kindness and love attracted the little ones to the great Friend of children.[42]

The New York Conference was blessed with two institutions of mercy within its boundaries, namely, the well known Klingberg Children's Home at New Britain, Connecticut, founded 1903, and the Elim Park Home of Rest, located since its beginning in 1906, at Shelton, Connecticut. The latter place, having a very beautiful location, had sufficient grounds to provide ample and suitable space for the Conference summer activities, including a boys' and girls' camp, started in 1924,[43] young people's assemblies, Bible conferences, etc. Another source of great blessing to the churches in the Eastern Conference was their foreign missionary project. In 1924 Erhardt Swenson and his wife were commissioned and sent to Argentine, South America, supported jointly by the Conference and the Young People's Union,[44] which had been formed in 1904. The numerical growth in membership is less encouraging and indicates a decrease for the last forty-five years. Thus, in 1905, there was recorded a Conference membership of 2,096, in 1933, 2,012, and in 1951, 1,759.

THE NEW ENGLAND CONFERENCE

As previously recorded, this conference, whose complete name since 1949 is the Baptist General Conference of New England, was organized at Worcester, Massachusetts, July 29, 1899, when 12 churches with a combined membership of 1,561 seceded from the Swedish Baptist Conference of the Eastern States in order to form a conference in the New England area.[45] With some exceptions, the Conference has experienced a steady growth in membership. At the close of the first decade, in 1910, the Conference records show 23 churches with 2,506 members, being the largest growth of membership in any comparative period in its history. Twenty-four churches were on the rolls from 1911 to 1922, the largest number at any time. The Twenty-fifth Anniversary Report of 1924 shows 20 churches with 2,420 members, being a slight decrease from 1910. At the Fortieth Anniversary in 1939 the number of churches had decreased to 17, but the membership had climbed to 2,703. In 1949, when the New England Conference celebrated its Golden Jubilee, the records showed 16 churches with a total membership of 2,828 members.[46]

---

[42] *History of the Swedish Baptist Conference of New England,* 1899–1949, p. 7 (MS).

[43] *Svenska Baptisternas New York Konferens Fyrtio-Andra Årsmöte,* 1925, p. 34.

[44] Ibid., p. 16.

[45] *Svenska Baptisternas i New England 25-Års Jubileums-Skrift,* 1899–1924, p. 6. See also *A Brief History of the Swedish Baptist Conference of New England,* 1899–1939, pp. 13–14; and *Golden Anniversary History of the Swedish Baptist Conference of New England,* 1899–1949 (MS), p. 2. J. E. Klingberg in his History of the New York Conference gives the number of seceding churches as 14, and the membership 1,578. In the General Conference Statistics for 1899–1900 fourteen churches are listed in the New England Conference.

In the Home Missions program the New England Conference has not lagged behind in its efforts to extend the kingdom of God within its own boundaries. The two more important activities here, as elsewhere, in the promotion of the work were the support of conference missionaries and the granting of financial aid to the smaller churches. The first missionary was John A. Roos, who was appointed October 13, 1899, at a salary of $600. Others soon followed, sometimes as many as three serving at the same time. It is significant that it was precisely in that period when the Conference employed a number of field workers that it had its largest ingathering of souls and the largest number of new churches.

The man who preached the gospel in New England longer than any other Swedish Baptist minister was G. W. Lindstrom. In fact he spent most of his life in that part of the country; for he came as a young boy with his parents to Worcester, Massachusetts, where he was converted and immersed at the age of twenty. With the exception of one year as pastor in Chicago and seven years, 1899–1906, as a Sunday school missionary in Sweden, Lindstrom gave all of his ministerial life to New England, covering a period of some thirty-five years. Though pre-eminently gifted as a promoter of church schools, he was claimed because of his varied talents, as pastor in a number of the churches, as missionary for ten years, 1912–1922, and as superintendent of the Elim Park Home for the Aged, Shelton, Connecticut, for eight years. At the age of seventy-three he entered the haven of rest, October 27, 1943.[47]

Three other important missionary agencies which operated within the Conference were the Sunday School Union, the Women's Union and the Young People's Union. The first one, "The Swedish Baptist Sunday School Union," was formed in 1907. In addition to the promotion of Sunday school work, the Union assumed the responsibility of the Bethel Beach Assembly. That was quite an undertaking in which the Swedish Baptists of Illinois in their Bethany Beach colony, preceded their brethren in New England by two years. The project originated in the following way: In 1907 interested friends bought a tract of land by the ocean, near Quincy, Massachusetts, which the Sunday School Union purchased in 1908, and named "Bethel Beach." This was to become, according to some, a second Northfield. The Conference took over the property in 1925. For many years Bethel Beach served as a rallying place for New England Baptists and a center for young people's assemblies and camps for boys and girls. Finally, however, the encroachment of the city and the character of the grounds caused the New England Baptists to look for a more desirable location, and the Bethel Beach property was sold in 1942.[48]

---

[46] *Golden Jubilee History,* 1949, p. 2.

[47] *Annual,* Swedish Baptist Churches of America, 1944–1945, Part 1, p. 111.

In its missionary endowment fund, the New England Conference apparently has no equal among the state conferences. The American Baptist Societies, with which the Swedish churches had had a harmonious relationship, let the Swedish Conference understand that the time had come, in the second decade of the twentieth century, when they ought to become self-supporting. The emergency called forth something really heroic on the part of comparatively few churches. It was voted by the Conference in 1919 to raise a Mission Fund of $20,000, the interest from which was to be used for home and foreign missions. Due to aggressive leadership and much missionary enthusiasm among the people, the money was raised in one year. After twenty years the fund had yielded an income of $20,869.44, or $869.44 more than the original fund. Says the Conference historian: "This Fund stands as a 'Rock of Gibraltar' to the memory of our forebears."[49] By 1949 the Fund had reached $27,500.

THE MIDDLE EAST CONFERENCE

This conference was organized in the summer of 1903 when 12 churches with a membership of 580 withdrew from the New York Conference to form a conference of their own.[50] The new conference was named the Pennsylvania Conference, but was later changed to the Middle East Conference. It included churches from three states, one of the churches, Jamestown, being located in western New York, two, Cleveland and Youngstown, in Ohio, and the other nine churches in the state of Pennsylvania.

[48] *New England Konferensens Elfte Årsmöte,* 1910, p. 40. See also *Forty Years,* op. cit., pp. 32–35, and *Golden Anniversary History,* op. cit. pp. 9–10.

[49] *Jubilee History,* op. cit., p. 6.

[50] *Årsbok,* Svenska Baptistförsamlingarna i Amerika, 1903–1904, p. 27.

The beginning seemed promising. J. P. Westerberg, a man of great devotion and self sacrifice, became the first missionary. He was succeeded by John Bjork in 1907. At the first annual meeting the membership had reached 616.[51] However, after only a few years, experiences of an adverse nature befell the Conference. Several of the small Pennsylvania churches ceased to exist and by 1906 the total number of churches in the Conference had been reduced to eight. The main reason for the decline seems to be the fact that the Swedes moved away, especially in the coal mining districts, and the people who replaced them were not won for the Baptist cause. The total membership, however, in the Conference held its own. By 1908 it had reached 808 in eight churches, and in 1951 nine churches reported a combined membership of 1,074, Jamestown, New York, having the largest membership, 195. During the last few years the progress of the Middle East Conference has been most encouraging. A spirit of concern and cooperation, as expressed especially in summer assemblies and rallies, augurs well for the future.[52]

THE LOWER MICHIGAN CONFERENCE

According to an article in "The Standard" by Jacob Peterson, the Michigan Conference was organized with five churches October 27, 1884.[53] The five churches were: Ishpeming, Iron Mountain, Manistee, Lakeside Muskegon and Temple Hill Cadillac. The place of organization was Ishpeming. The churches at Daggett, Upper Michigan, and Ludington in Lower Michigan, although organized before 1884, were not charter members, but united with the Conference later on. As is evident from the location of these five churches, the Conference originally included both Upper and Lower Michigan. The fact of the long distances separating those churches, with Lake Michigan between, led them to divide the Conference into two groups, the Lower Michigan and the Upper Michigan conferences. That took place at Muskegon July 28, 1893. There were eight churches at that time which became charter members of the Lower Michigan Conference, namely, Manistee, Ludington, Muskegon, Cadillac, Tustin, Grand Rapids, Dalton and White Hall.

In the earlier years especially, the Conference had missionaries who did much to expand the work and take up new fields even though none served for a very long period. In the first decade considerable progress was made. By 1903 the eight charter member churches, which had a total membership of 350 in 1893, had grown to 13 churches and 728 members. However, a period of spiritual dullness retarded the normal growth of the Conference. For example, in the year 1913–1914 only three persons were baptized in the whole Conference area, and by 1930 the number of churches had decreased to eleven, or two less than in 1903, with a membership slightly larger, or 878, than twenty-seven years before. But a brighter day dawned for the Lower Michigan Conference in the late thirties. Several of the smaller churches were revived and the larger ones as well experienced considerable growth in membership. In fact, for some years Lower Michigan proportionately made more progress than any other conference in the entire country. One of the basic reasons for the advance, no doubt, has been the well organized Young People's summer assemblies, actively supported by all the pastors and churches. In 1951 the Conference recorded a membership of 2,100 in 13 churches.

---

[51] *Årsbok,* 1904–1905, p. 25.

[52] *The Standard,* March 18, 1949, pp. 1–2.

[53] *The Standard,* May 13, 1949, pp. 1–2. In a brief history of the Conference by R. A. Clint, 1901, (MS) it is claimed that the Michigan Conference was organized Sept. 4, 1885.

THE UPPER MICHIGAN CONFERENCE

As previously recorded, both the Lower and Upper Michigan conferences are offshoots of an original all state Michigan conference formed in 1884. The Upper Michigan churches, meeting at Norway, September 25, 1893, organized themselves into a conference of their own, composed of the following nine churches: Ishpeming, Manistique, Republic, Iron River, Menominee, Daggett, Norway, Iron Mountain, and Ironwood. The combined membership at that time was close to 600.[54] After the first decade, in 1903, the number of churches had increased to 16, with a total membership of 720. However, both missionaries, of whom quite a few served in the early years, and pastors found the spiritual soil as hard as the iron ore dug out of the Michigan mines. By 1917 the total membership had declined to a low of 649. In 1926, when the lowest ebb was reached, Oscar Tornquist, at that time pastor in Ironwood, told the Conference: "After thirty-two years as a Conference we are fewer in membership than we were when organized. Does it pay? Is it worth while?"[55] It is interesting to note that a steady gain began shortly thereafter, resulting in a membership of 1,415 in 1951, with 16 churches. Truly, the missionary money which the General Conference has poured into the Upper Michigan field in late years has yielded a rich return. Furthermore, an aggressive young people's assembly, started in 1929, together with an almost phenomenal growth of the Sunday schools in some places, are a few of the creative factors in the onward march.

---

[54] *A History of the Upper Michigan Conference* 1901 (MS), p. 3. See also *The Standard,* May 20, 1949, pp. 1–2.

[55] *The Standard,* May 20, 1949, p. 2.

THE WISCONSIN CONFERENCE

It was the wise Kingdom-builder A. P. Ekman, who, when he served as missionary of the General Conference, encouraged the Swedish Baptists of Wisconsin to organize a conference. Similar projects were launched through the inspiration of this missionary in five other states or districts. In the summer of 1884, Ekman came to Grantsburg, Wisconsin, and enlisted the interest of the pastor, J. P. Sundstrom, as well as all the Baptists in Burnett County, in the new venture. A meeting was held in Ogema, October 3–6, 1884, when the Wisconsin Conference was formed of the following nine churches: Trade Lake, Wood River, Grantsburg, Prairie, Ogema, Marinette, Oconto, Stockholm, and Waupaca. Sister Bay and Ashland joined the Conference a few months later.[56] The nine churches had a combined membership of about 350.

The records of that meeting in Ogema in 1884 reveal very characteristically the frame of mind of the pioneer Swedish Baptists, and prove that they were imbued with a desire to further the Master's cause in the whole world. They deliberated on the following subjects: State missions, cooperation with the American Baptists, mission work in general and missionary work among the heathen, women's missions, ministerial and missionary education, and Swedish Baptist literature. They also passed a resolution on temperance. The minutes closed with the following significant remark: "All of God's children were filled with joy and thankfulness for God's goodness."[57]

In the early years the Wisconsin Conference was blessed with considerable progress in its missionary extension. The first permanent missionary, J. P. Sundstrom, who served the conference for five years, 1892–1897, was not only a hard-working man, but a missionary statesman as well. During his term of ministry he organized not less than eight churches, which is really a remarkable record considering the limited Swedish population of Wisconsin and the fact that missionary work in the early years was confined to Swedes only. Sundstrom's successors followed in his footsteps and carried the gospel light wherever their countrymen could be found. In some years there were as many as four missionaries in the field at the same time: one general missionary, one Sunday school missionary, and two district missionaries. The growth in membership, if not phenomenal, was rather extraordinary. For example, the nine (or eleven) charter member churches in 1884, with a membership of 350, had increased to 25 churches with a combined membership of 1,113 by 1895.[58] At the turn of the century the churches numbered 27, having a membership of 1,200, whereas the number of churches by 1951 had decreased to 20, while the combined membership had risen to 1,973. As in some other states, a few churches had affiliated with the American Baptist Convention.

---

[56] O. Ellison, *Svenska Baptisternas i Wisconsin Missionshistoria,* 1902, p. 74. See also *Golden Jubilee* of Swedish Baptist Conference of Wisconsin, 1884–1934, p. 22; and *The Standard,* April 1, 1949, pp. 1–2.

[57] *Golden Jubilee History,* op. cit., p. 23.

Northwest Wisconsin Mission Society

This organization, which for a period of thirty-six years kept F. O. Carlson in the field as a missionary, made an unusually rich contribution to the missionary work in northwestern Wisconsin. It was preceded by another mission society, organized July 4, 1871, by members from the Trade Lake and Wood River churches. In their abounding poverty and great liberality, those believers secured a forty acre tract of land, which, with voluntary labor, they cleared, planted, and harvested for about eight years, using the proceeds for missionary work in Burnett County. Several missionaries were sent out, including John Ring, E. W. Erickson and L. J. Ahlstrom. "The Baptist Mission Forty" became well known among all the pioneers.[59]

The Northwest Wisconsin Mission Society was formed in Trade Lake, December 21, 1890, with sixteen charter members. At the end of the first year 220 members were enrolled, and in 1894 a membership of 326 was reported. An annual membership fee of twenty-five cents was agreed upon, which was later raised to one dollar. The following spring, F. O. Carlson was called as missionary, and on April 19, 1891, he began his long ministry of missionary labor in Burnett and Polk counties of northwestern Wisconsin lasting for thirty-six years. It was a ministry which in many respects is unique in the entire history of Swedish Baptists. At the beginning the salary of the missionary was the small sum of $25.00 a month, and the call was only a month at a time for fear that the funds would fail. However, the great Lord of the harvest did not fail. Many lost souls turned to Christ, and in the first few years three churches were organized as a result of Carlson's labors, namely at El Salem, Clam River Valley, and Wood Lake.

---

[58] *Årsbok,* Allmänna Konferensen, 1895, p. 14.

[59] *Golden Jubilee History,* op. cit., p. 21. O. Ellison, op. cit., p. 84.

F. O. Carlson was a man with a rugged and extremely interesting personality. His conversion in Sweden, where he was born October 4, 1861, resembles in many respects that of Saul on the Damascus road. A most thorough-going change it was, leading the young believer immediately to testify for his Lord. As a missionary he was a most zealous and tireless worker. To every person he met, Carlson never failed to press home the question, fearlessly but kindly, "My friend, are you born again?" Often it evoked ridicule and persecution. At one place a preacher of a certain denomination was exceedingly anxious to get rid of the soul winning Baptist missionary, and he told one of his deacons that the only thing to do was to send a bullet through the head of the Baptist. The result was that the zealous deacon attacked Carlson, broke his guitar, and almost killed him. However, God turned the trial into blessings and victory for His Kingdom, for nine souls found Christ as their Savior in that community during the next few days.[60] Throughout that whole region of western Wisconsin as well as in many of the churches in the large cities there may be found scores of F. O. Carlson's converts who are actively engaged in Kingdom business and who will arise and call him blessed. The Wisconsin missionary came to the end of his active earthly career on July 6, 1950.

The Northern Wisconsin Mission Society

This was patterned after the Northwest Society and was organized in Ashland October 3, 1904. The object was to do missionary work in Ashland, Bayfield, and Douglas counties, and the field included all the northwestern Wisconsin from Superior to Ironwood, Michigan. The first missionary was Andrew Larson, a deacon in the Ashland church, who began his work in the service of the society April 1, 1905, and continued until his untimely death in March, 1909, at the age of forty-nine.[61] Larson was a typical pioneer farmer-preacher and, like F. O. Carlson, had no formal training for the ministry. However, his was an unusually rich experience in things spiritual, and from the time of his conversion in early youth, while supporting himself and his family with the labor of his hands, he was constantly engaged, both publicly and privately, in proclaiming Christ and His redeeming love. It pleased God to bless Larson's missionary labors, as a result of which many responded to the gospel of salvation, and several new churches were organized in the frontier settlements. If it is true that F. O. Carlson was a man of the Petrine type, bold, rugged, prompt of speech and impetuous, Andrew Larson was clearly of the Johannine type, quiet, cautious, deliberate, and considerate. His speech was that becoming to a Christian and his character beyond reproach. Other missionaries succeeded Larson and carried on until the Society disbanded in 1925.

---

[60] *Golden Jubilee History,* op. cit., p. 31. See also L. J. Ahlstrom, *Femtiofem År i Vestra Wisconsin,* 1924, pp. 188–222; this contains a very interesting and realistic story of the Northwest Wisconsin Mission Society and its aggressive missionary.

[61] Minutes of the Northern Wisconsin Mission Society, 1904–1925. See also *Nya Wecko-Posten,* April 13, 1909, p. 6.

Wood Lake Camp[62]

The story of the Wood Lake Assembly Grounds constitutes one of the most interesting evidences of God's grace and providence in the annals of Conference Baptists. The camp, which was started in 1933, is beautifully situated on the southwestern shore of Wood Lake and comprises 23 acres of ground, with 23 buildings, all paid for.[63] As in the other states, the youth work carried on in the assemblies and Bible camps has made a profound impact upon the life of the Conference.

THE IOWA CONFERENCE

As has been recorded in Chapter Ten, the two Iowa churches, Village Creek and New Sweden, that existed in 1856 became members of the general, or tri-state conference organized that year in Rock Island, Illinois. Two years later the churches in Minnesota formed a conference of their own, and from 1862, in particular, the original conference was known as the Illinoïs-Iowa Conference. In 1864 that Conference was definitely organized to include those two states. When the churches of Nebraska and western Iowa in 1872 formed a separate conference, the Illinois-Iowa Conference changed its name to the Illinois and Eastern Iowa Conference. Thus matters continued until 1883, part of the Iowa churches going with Illinois and the other part with Nebraska.

By that time the Swedish Baptists of Iowa felt the need of a conference confined to their own state. Hence a meeting was called in Des Moines June 29–30, 1883, when the present Iowa conference was organized with the following eleven churches: Des Moines, Kiron, Council Bluffs, Sioux City, Stratford (Swede Bend), Swea, Burlington, Village Creek, Forest City, Denison, and Meriden.[64] The eleven churches had a combined membership of 459. The numerical growth was steady, though not very rapid. Several churches either disbanded after a few years, or joined other Baptist groups. Furthermore, Swedish immigration to Iowa was not nearly as large as in some other states. After a decade, in 1893, the total membership had reached 920, in 1903, 1,002, in 1913 it had decreased to 964, in 1923, it stood at 1,030, and in 1951 Iowa had 14 Conference Baptist churches with a membership of 2,230.

---

[62] The story of Summer Assemblies will be more completely covered in a later chapter on Young People's Work.

[63] *The Standard*, April 1, 1949. See also *Ten Years History of the Wisconsin Summer Assembly* (MS).

In the long list of faithful pastors and missionaries in Iowa, the most notable, in several respects is no doubt A. G. Lagerquist, sometimes known as "the Bishop of Iowa."[65] It was his privilege to give about thirty years of his life to the ministry of the gospel in that state. Lagerquist was the type of personality that will long be remembered. He was rugged and courageous, guileless and kind, trustworthy and humble, and always a staunch Baptist.[66] It was largely due to his energetic leadership and persistent work that the Swedish Baptists of Iowa were able to hold a great jubilee celebration at New Sweden May 17, 1931. The event commemorated the erection at that place in the fall of 1854 of the first Swedish Baptist meeting house, not only in America but in the whole world. A memorial stone with an appropriate historical inscription was set up and unveiled on the same occasion.[67] The tireless Lagerquist, too, collected the source material for that massive volume of 477 pages on "Eighty Years of Swedish Baptist Work in Iowa," 1853–1933, by L. J. Ahlstrom. This is the most comprehensive history up to now ever written on Swedish Baptist work in any part of America.

THE SOUTH DAKOTA CONFERENCE

In 1860 the whole white population in the Dakota Territory (which at that time included also North Dakota) was less than 2,500.[68] The westward movement, however, greatly stimulated by the transcontinental railroad completed in 1869, brought an ever increasing stream of immigrants to Dakota, including many Scandinavians. As stated in

---

[64] *Minnes-Album,* Svenska Baptisternas i Iowa Tjugofem-Åriga Verksamhet, 1883–1908, p. 13. See also L. J. Ahlstrom, *Swedish Baptist Work in Iowa,* 1853–1933, pp. 284–285.

[65] Gordon Carlson in *Ebenezer* 1944, pp. 71–82, has an interesting article on Lagerquist.

[66] Annual. Swedish Baptist Churches of America, 1942–1943, pp. 114–115.

[67] Ahlstrom, op. cit., pp. 421–475.

[68] The Standard, Sept. 2, 1949.

Chapter Eight, the first Swedish Baptist church formed in South Dakota was the one in Big Springs, organized 1869. Two years later the Dalesburg church was founded, followed by the organization of two Danish churches in 1872 and 1873. Those four churches, two Swedish and two Danish, poor in pennies but rich in faith, gathered in the sod house of Rasmus Jensen at Lodi December 31, 1874, and effected the organization of the Scandinavian Conference of Baptists in Dakota Territory.[69]

In 1882 Jacob Olson, a Norwegian by birth, who had spent one year in Edgren's Seminary took up missionary work in South Dakota. His name is more intimately connected with Scandinavian Baptist work of that state than that of any other man, for it was a ministry that lasted for nearly forty years. Both as a general missionary and as a pastor, Olson gave his best to a fruitful, soul winning service in South Dakota. In 1911, when the Conference was thirty-seven years old, the churches numbered 23 with a combined membership of 1,218. At that time it was found advisable, for several reasons, to divide the conference into two — one Swedish and one Danish-Norwegian. The Swedish conference was organized with ten churches July 8, 1911, at Big Springs. The membership of the ten churches was 684.[70] Twenty-five years later, in 1936, the number of churches had decreased by one, while the membership had increased to 1,011. In 1951 eleven churches reported a total membership of 1,262. As in other conferences, a well organized Young People's Assembly work has greatly stimulated the work in the last decade.

In North Dakota the first Scandinavian Baptist church was organized in Fargo with seven members March 30, 1883. In 1891 the Swedish members of the congregation withdrew and formed a Swedish Baptist church. Several other churches were established in North Dakota. By 1902 they were eight in number, and that year they united themselves into a Swedish Baptist Conference of North Dakota.[71] In 1918 the Conference counted 12 churches with a combined membership of 418. However, for several reasons Swedish Baptist work did not thrive in North Dakota. The Conference gradually ceased to function, and the churches, with two exceptions, were affiliated with the American Baptist State Convention. The two exceptions were the churches at Kulm and Drayton, which joined the Minnesota Conference. A new church organized at Minot in 1951 has affiliated with the South Dakota Conference.

---

[69] *A History of Swedish Baptists in South Dakota,* 1868–1936, p. 4.

[70] Ibid., pp. 8–10.

[71] *Historik,* Svenska Baptisternas i North Dakota Konferens 1912, pp. 21–41.

THE PLATTE VALLEY CONFERENCE

The history of this Conference may be divided into three periods. The first one, the Western Iowa and Nebraska Conference, covered the years 1872–1883. The second period began with the year 1883 when the churches of Eastern Iowa separated from the Illinois and Eastern Iowa Conference and joined the churches in Western Iowa to organize a state Conference of Iowa. That left the Nebraska Conference free to form a conference of its own. A third period was ushered in when, in 1921, the three remaining churches of the Colorado Conference — Colorado Springs, Denver, and Greeley, merged with the Nebraska Conference. A few years later the name was changed to the Platte Valley Conference.

The original organization, the Western Iowa and Nebraska Conference, was formed in the summer of 1872. The meeting place was the primitive farm home of F. A. Hill in Oakland. Mr. Hill had been a member of the first Swedish Baptist church in America, at Rock Island, Illinois, before he came to Oakland, Nebraska, and filed homestead in 1868. Three churches in western Iowa, Kiron, Denison, and Meriden, and three churches in Nebraska, Oakland, Omaha (Scandinavian), and Estina, constituted the Conference.[72] A prominent and highly successful leader in the Swedish Baptist work of Nebraska in those early years was N. Hayland. He spent the years 1873 to 1884 in that state both as pastor and missionary.

In the year 1883, when a separate Nebraska State Conference was organized, Lauritz Johanson began his twenty years of ministry in the Oakland church. His wise leadership both in the church and in the Conference made for rich contributions to the building of the Kingdom. Carl Hasselblad, several of whose children are active in full time Christian service as pastors, pastors' wives, and missionaries, holds the distinction of the longest service on the Nebraska field. For thirty years or more, as pastor and missionary, he faithfully told redemption's story in that state. A typical pioneer missionary was E. W. Olson, in the service of the Swedish Baptist Sunday School Union of Nebraska 1912–1921. Of him it is said:

> He held meetings in school houses or in the lonely cabins out on the western prairies. His work in the sand hills of Nebraska was of outstanding value. He not only gave out the Word and preached, but had to help the

---

[72] Carl J. Seaquist, *History of the Platte Valley Baptist Conference,* 1872–1947, pp. 11–14. C. R. Osbeck, *Svenska Baptisterna i Nebraska,* 1869–1919, pp. 85–87. Allfrid Sjolander, *Några Historiska Drag av Vår Mission i Nebraska* (MS) 1869–1901.

settlers with many other things. He painted and shingled churches, plastered and papered pioneer houses, branded cattle, repaired organs, clocks, and sewing machines, he put up windmills and helped in the harvest, made coffins and held funerals with equal skill and loving care.[73]

For some twenty five years preceding 1934 there was a trying period of discouragement and retreat in the Nebraska Conference. Several churches, about sixteen in all, either dissolved or joined the American Baptist State Convention. The idea prevailed in Nebraska, as in many other parts of the country, that in the difficult period of language transition from Swedish to English a church, or conference, must necessarily sell out to the State Convention as soon as the English language came into use. In some cases, too, the respective State Conventions brought pressure to bear to that effect.[74] However, some ten, or more Conference churches in Nebraska weathered the storm. The turning point came in the midst of the drought year 1934. A refreshing rain had fallen upon the parched ground, and the assembled Conference delegates bowed their knees to thank God for the rain. Then it pleased the Lord of the harvest also to let fall spiritually refreshing showers upon receptive hearts.[75]. The Conference was going to live and go forward! The General Conference extended liberal aid to the smaller churches. After a few years a Conference missionary was called. With his help and that of enthusiastic pastors, churches were revived and new ones organized. The eleven churches reported in 1934, with a total membership of 1,357, had increased to 20 by 1951, having a combined membership of 2,034.

THE KANSAS CONFERENCE

The Kansas Conference began as a Scandinavian Missionary Society in 1879, or probably even earlier. In 1881, when the Society met in Topeka, it was decided to change the name to the Scandinavian Baptist Conference of Kansas, and to be affiliated with Kansas Baptist State Convention.[76] The Conference at that time consisted of twelve churches with a combined membership of 230. In the constitution adopted in 1891 the name was changed to The Swedish Baptist Conference of Kansas. After more than sixty years the Kansas Conference was dissolved in 1943, its eight churches integrating more fully with the Baptist State Convention though some of them have continued to maintain cordial and cooperative relations with the General Conference.

---

[73] Seaquist, op. cit., p. 15.

[74] Ibid., pp. 16–17.

[75] Ibid., pp. 19–20.

[76] P. Lovene, *History of the Swedish Baptist Churches of Kansas and Missouri*, 1869–1927, p. 72. See also Huggerth and Nyquist, *A History of the Swedish Baptist Churches of Kansas* (MS) 1881–1901.

August Johnson, lovingly known as "The Kansas Apostle,"[77] was unique in the annals of Swedish Baptists. For some over thirty years, 1877–1910, he preached the gospel as pastor and missionary in Kansas. At least eight churches were organized by him. In the field of philanthropy he has few equals. Generosity was natural to him, and he practised in a very literal sense, throughout his long life, the words of Jesus: "I was hungry and ye gave me to eat; naked and ye clothed me." He would frequently give away his last penny or his coat. To see him coming across the pasture with a sack of flour and a bag of clothing for a needy family was a common occurrence. In 1902 the Ottawa University awarded him the degree of Doctor of Divinity, not for his learning but for his faithful Christian work. E. W. Olson is another preacher on the Kansas field who in many respects resembled August Johnson. For he, too, became all things to all men that by all means he might save some. Not less than twenty-four years did he labor as a successful Sunday school missionary in the state.[78]

THE COLUMBIA CONFERENCE

Throughout the years the Columbia Conference has experienced a number of changes both in name and constituency. The original conference was organized in Seattle, Washington, December 28, 1889, the initiative being taken by F. O. Nelson who at that time was pastor of The First Swedish Baptist Church, Seattle. It was composed of the following five churches: Seattle, Tacoma, Pearson, Delta, all in Washington, and Portland, Oregon. The resultant body was known as The Swedish Baptist Conference of the North Pacific Coast.[79] Since some of the Norwegian-Danish brethren had expressed a desire to cooperate with the Swedes, the name Scandinavian was substituted for Swedish at the Conference the following year, 1890. For some reason or other, however, the united Scandinavian Conference did not appear to run smoothly, and the non-Swedish churches withdrew in 1893, as did also the Swedish church of Portland, Oregon.[80] The remaining eight churches, all Swedish, with a combined membership of 316, reorganized in 1894 and changed the name to The Swedish Baptist Conference of Washington. Another change took place in 1904, the name selected being the Swedish Baptist Conference of Western Washington, the churches in the eastern part of the state having withdrawn owing to the great distances between the two sections of the state. A few years later, apparently in 1909, the urge was again felt to enlarge the borders, and as a result all of Washington and Northern Idaho were included in the Conference under the name The Swedish Baptist Conference of Washington and Northern Idaho.

---

[77] A. J. Wingblade in *Advance 1947,* pp. 68–74. See also Lovene, *History of the Swedish Baptists of Kansas,* pp. 30–32. Gustaf Nyquist, *Kansas Apostel* (MS) 86 pp.; and *Nya Wecko-Postens Kalender* 1911, pp. 183–192.

[78] Lovene, op. cit., pp. 76–79.

[79] P. Benson, *Svenska Baptisternas i Västra Washington Konferens,* pp. 75–92. See also Andrew Johnson and L. W. Linder, *Historik Över Svenska Baptisterna i Washington 1901,* MS. A. H. Johnson, *The Golden Jubilee of the Columbia Swedish Baptist Conference,* 1889–1939, pp. 31–39.

In the meanwhile the Swedish Baptists of Oregon had not remained inactive. A Mission Society was organized in 1894, which was superseded by the Oregon Conference which was formed in 1898 by five churches.[81] The combined membership of the churches was approximately one hundred and sixty. About thirty years later the number of churches remained the same, namely five, and the total membership had increased to 478. The increase was primarily in the Portland church which has experienced a healthy growth. However, with the exception of Portland, the Oregon field has proved rather stony ground for Swedish Baptists.

The final reorganization took place in Seattle June 16, 1930. Both the Washington and the Oregon conferences had dissolved and a new organization was formed under the name of The Columbia Swedish Baptist Conference. In area it is the largest of any of the state or district conferences, including Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, and British Columbia, being equal in area to more than one fourth of the entire United States.[82] By means of an aggressive missionary program, including a strong women's organization and a well promoted youth work, this conference has made great progress in recent years, being the third in order of membership in the entire General Conference fellowship, with 33 churches and a combined membership of 4,622 in 1951. This represents a growth from 21 churches and 2,595 members in 1930.

THE CALIFORNIA CONFERENCE

The forerunner to the conference was the Swedish Baptist Mission Society of California, organized on the initiative of C. M. Nelson, Oakland, October 9, 1890. Four churches were represented in the first meeting, namely, Oakland, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Linne. The concrete evidence of the missionary spirit was a subscription of three hundred dollars. L. J. Ahlstrom became the first missionary, devoting most of his time to Kingsburg and vicinity.[83] He served only one year, 1890–1891. However, the life of the Mission Society proved to be of a comparatively short duration, for after about four years it ceased to function.

---

[80] A. H. Johnson, op. cit., pp. 31–32. See also Backlund, *Swedish Baptists in America,* op. cit., p. 137.

[81] A. G. Osbrink, *Svenska Baptisternas i Oregon Historia,* 1901, (MS), pp. 19–22.

[82] A. H. Johnson, op. cit., pp. 35–36.

A similar attempt at spreading the gospel in southern California was organized in Los Angeles February 18, 1893. The object of the new venture, under the direction of F. O. Nelson, at that time pastor in Los Angeles, was to evangelize the Scandinavians living in the southern part of the state. But the economic depression in the nineties, so keenly felt in the entire country, made it difficult to raise funds, and after a year this Mission Society, too, like the earlier one, was forced out of existence.[84]

By 1898 the prospects had brightened considerably, and the Swedish Baptist people picked up courage and commenced to plan for new missionary endeavors. The result was a meeting in San Francisco June 19, 1899, when the Swedish Baptist Conference of California was formed. At that time California had seven Swedish Baptist churches with a total membership of 467. It is significant that forty years later, in 1941, there were only eight churches, whereas the membership gain was substantial, being a total of 1,885. The 1951 report records 21 churches with a combined membership of 4,055. Undoubtedly that represents the greatest relative growth of any state or district conference. Of special interest, too, is the fact that the first chairman of the Conference board in California was none other than John Alexis Edgren, who spent the last twenty years of his life in California.

CONFERENCES IN CANADA

The field covered by the two Canadian Conferences is primarily that part of Western Canada known as the Prairie Provinces, namely, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba.[85] This is a vast area, each province being three times the size of Minnesota. In the comparatively heavy Canadian immigration of the period 1890–1914, reaching its peak in the decade 1903–1913, there was a large Scandinavian element. It is estimated that by 1914 the Scandinavians numbered at least 90,000 in Western Canada. The coming of World War I closed off the European immigration, and it has never since then regained any considerable proportions.[86] Unlike their fellow-immigrants in the States, the Scandinavians in Western Canada did not, as a rule, settle in colonies, but scattered thinly on large farms throughout the entire West. This, no doubt, has been the main retarding factor in religious work among the Scandinavians of Western Canada.[87]

---

[83] P. Benson, *Historical Review,* Swedish Baptists in California, 1884–1939, (MS), p. 4. See also Omark, *A History of the Swedish Baptist Churches in California,* 1944, p. 93 f.; and Engwall, *En Kort Historisk Översikt av Svenska Baptisternas i California Verksamhet,* 1884–1926 (MS), p. 36.

[84] Benson, op. cit., p. 5. Omark, op. cit., pp. 97–98.

[85] Two of the churches in the Central Canada Conference, Kenora and Port Arthur, are located in the province of Ontario, and the British Columbia churches belong to the Columbia Conference.

It is interesting to note that the beginning of Swedish Baptist work in Canada, as was apparently true of Swedish immigration also, was in the eastern part of the country, in the province of Quebec. Here, in the city of Waterville, as early as 1885 a few Swedish Baptists started to hold prayer meetings in the homes. Some years later a Sunday school was begun with an enrollment of 20 children. The next step was the organization of a small Swedish Baptist church which took place December 4, 1892.[88] After some time, however, the Swedish church became the nucleus of an English Baptist church, and that apparently terminated Swedish Baptist work in Eastern Canada.

The first Swedish immigrants to settle in Western Canada, according to available records, came from the state of Michigan in 1874. They located at Winnipeg which at that time was a comparatively small town on the frontier. In that group of immigrants there were a few Baptists. It was among them that A. P. Ekman, General Conference missionary, conducted the first Swedish Baptist service in Western Canada in the early part of the year 1883.[89] But the missionary saw no possibility at the time for a Swedish Baptist work in Canada, and so returned without further action.

The coming of Martin Berg from North Dakota in 1894 to preach the gospel in Winnipeg really constitutes the beginning of permanent Swedish Baptist work in Western Canada. After much discouraging and unfruitful labor he, too, was ready to give up. However, some believing sisters encouraged him to stay and promised to raise funds to support him another month. In the meanwhile it pleased God to visit the praying saints with a revival. The result was the organization of the First Scandinavian Baptist Church of Winnipeg with fourteen charter members on May 1, 1894.[90] Martin Berg became the first pastor, being succeeded by L. M. Stolberg in 1895, who was appointed pastor of the Winnipeg church and also as general supervisor of the whole Scandinavian Baptist work in Canada.

---

[86] C. E. Carlson, Report on Canada in *Annual,* Baptist General Conference of America, 1945–1946, Part 1, pp. 39–47.

[87] Edwin E. Brandt, *A Short Historical Account of the Swedish Baptists of Canada,* 1931, p. 3.

[88] Ibid., pp. 3–4. See also letters by C. E. Anderson in *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Jan. 3, 1911, and in *Svenska Standaret,* May 22, 1923.

[89] *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* 1883, p. 188. See also Brandt, op. cit., p. 5.

Before the turn of the century there was one more church formed in the province of Manitoba, namely at Hilltop, on July 17, 1896. On September 1, 1897, a church was also founded at Kenora, Ontario. The coming in 1905 of Fred Palmborg as missionary really began a new era in the Swedish Baptist work of Canada.[91] When he started his work there were nine or ten small churches in all of Canada with a combined membership of about 200. Six years later, in 1911, the number of churches had increased to 20, with a total membership of 575. These churches had also been led by Palmborg to organize two conferences: the Alberta Conference, formed at Camrose, Alberta, July 14, 1906, and the Central Conference, organized at Winnipeg, Manitoba, July 27, 1907.[92] It should be borne in mind, however, that the increase in the number of churches was promoted, no doubt, by the large Canadian immigration at that period.

For some years the work in Canada continued to prosper. In 1914, at the beginning of the First World War, the churches numbered 27 with a total membership of more than 800. In the early nineteen-twenties, however, a rather wintry season retarded the progress of Swedish Baptist work in Canada considerably. It became a real struggle for existence. Thus the records indicate the following trends: In 1925 there were 23 churches with a combined membership of 743, or a decrease of about 150 members from 1914; in 1930 the number of churches was still 23 with a total membership of 929; and in 1951 there were 20 churches recorded with a total membership of 1,146. The report to the General Conference in 1951 indicated a much more promising situation in the Canadian Mission than had been the case for several decades. Aggressive work and wise leadership on the part of the general missionary and the pastors were beginning to bear fruit. The cooperation which the Swedish Baptists of Canada for a long time have had with the Baptist Union of Western Canada terminated in

---

[90] Brandt, op. cit., p. 5. See also Erik Berg, *Lösryckta Blad ur Skandinaviska Baptisternas i Canada Historia* (MS).

[91] See Chapter Twenty-one.

[92] *Årsbok, Svenska Baptistförsamlingarna i Amerika,* 1907, p. 46. See also Backlund, *Swedish Baptists in America,* op. cit., p. 138.

1948. This left the churches free to affiliate fully with the General Conference which for the last fifty years has liberally supported the Canadian Mission.

THE FINNISH BAPTIST MISSION UNION

This chapter would not be complete without recording a few brief facts concerning the Baptist work among the Swedish Finns. Like their neighbors in Sweden, many Swedish Finns emigrated to the United States in the eighties and nineties. Those who were Baptists from the old country found their spiritual homes in the local Swedish Baptist churches wherever they happened to locate. In so doing it was easy to forget the particular needs of their own people. By the turn of the century those needs had become a tremendous burden on the hearts of a few. More particularly, it was a young man by the name of Edward Flemming, at that time a student at the Morgan Park Theological Seminary, who became fired with "a burning ambition to win his countrymen for Christ."[93] As always, genuine faith produced action. The Finnish Baptist Mission Union of America was organized with eleven persons as charter members in Chicago March 31, 1901. The object of the Union was the sending out of evangelists and missionaries to preach the gospel to the Finnish people, using both the Finnish and the Swedish languages. It is only fair to state that the advent of the Union had been prepared by a number of local mission societies, operating among the Swedish Finnish people in different parts of the country.[94]

Considerable success crowned the missionary efforts in the early years. By 1906, when the annual meeting was held at Duluth, Minnesota, the Union counted more than a dozen churches and societies. Twelve ministers and one lady missionary were active in the field. At that meeting action was taken to publish "Finska Missions-Posten" (now the Mission Post), which became the first religious paper among the Finnish people in America. For the first twenty-seven years Matts Esselstrom, probably the most prominent leader in the Union, served as editor of the paper. The growth in the number of new church organizations was encouraging. Before 1901, when the Mission Union was formed, there existed only two Swedish Finnish Baptist churches, namely, at Worcester, Massachusetts and at Felch, Michigan, both founded in 1900. The Year Book for 1916 lists 15 churches, distributed over the northern part of the country as follows: two in Massachusetts, one in New York City, one in Chicago, four in Upper Michigan, two in Minnesota, three in Washington, and two in California.[95]

---

[93] Theodore Anderson, Finnish Baptist Work in America, *Advance, 1949,* p. 60. See also Bruce Fleming, *The Finnish Baptist Mission Union of America 1940,* pp. 196–197. Alfred Holmgren, Baptist Mission Union Fifty Years, *Advance 1951,* pp. 63–66.

[94] Holmgren, op. cit., p. 63.

The last thirty years, apparently, have failed to keep pace with the early progress. Only fifteen churches were registered as members of the Union in 1948, the same number as in 1916. Two of the more probable reasons for the lack of advance, no doubt, are the limited resources of the comparatively few and weak churches, and also the fact that the Finns constitute a very small portion of the population in America. In 1948 an arrangement was made by which the churches of the Finnish Baptist Mission Union (changed to The Baptist Mission Union of America in 1947) would be encouraged to unite with the nearest state or district conference of the General Conference, and that they would be considered as affiliated members of the Baptist General Conference. However, they might still maintain their own organization and missionary program much like one of the Swedish Baptist state or district conferences. Practically all of the Swedish Finnish churches have availed themselves of this cooperation, by which they also benefit in the way of financial support from the respective conferences within the fellowship of the General Conference.[96]

---

[95] *Årsbok,* Svenska Baptist Missionföreningen i Amerika, 1916, p. 17.

[96] *Annual,* Baptist General Conference of America, 1947–1948, p. 40; *Annual,* 1950–1951, p. 51. See also Anderson in *Advance 1949,* op. cit., p. 63.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

EDUCATIONAL EXPANSION

The founding of the Theological Seminary in 1871, its sacrifices and victories, under the leadership of its noble and heroic founder, Captain John Alexis Edgren, have been recorded in Chapter Eleven. The story naturally divided itself into two periods: The first period of dependence, 1871–1884, when the Seminary was a Scandinavian department of the Baptist Union Theological Seminary of Chicago; and the first period of independence, 1884–1888, when the Swedish Baptist churches attempted to support the Seminary for one year in St. Paul, Minnesota, and for nearly three years in Stromsburg, Nebraska. In this chapter the object will be to trace the further development of the Theological Seminary in its second period of dependence, Morgan Park 1888–1914, and its second period of independence, St. Paul, Minnesota, from 1914 to the present.[1] Moreover, it will be the purpose to give a brief account of other aspects of educational expansion among Swedish Baptists.

MORGAN PARK 1888–1914

It was a period of twenty-six comparatively uneventful years during which a large group of well prepared men were graduated from the Seminary and went out as successful heralds of the cross to all parts of the world. The combined membership of Swedish Baptist churches increased in those years from 10,161 in 1888 to about 29,000 in 1914.

The General Conference of 1888, meeting in Chicago, was very important in the history of the Seminary, for it was then decided to move the school back to Morgan Park again to unite with the Baptist Union Theological Seminary, and to become a separate Swedish Department, with the Danes and the Norwegians composing another department. The name of the school was first called "The Swedish Department of the Baptist Union Theological Seminary," and later, from 1892, "The Swedish Theological Seminary, The Divinity School of the University of Chicago." Eric Sandell and N. N. Morten were engaged as regular teachers, Sandell also serving as acting dean, and they were to be placed on an equal footing with the members of the University faculty.

---

[1] For a more complete account of the Theological Seminary see Adolf Olson and Virgil Olson, *Seventy-five Years,* A History of Bethel Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota, 1871–1946.

The same annual meeting of the General Conference also took another important step in calling Carl Gustaf Lagergren, then pastor in Sundsvall, Sweden, to assume the duties of dean of the Seminary. Lagergren was well qualified for this position, having received a higher education in Sweden. He was known not only as a brilliant student, but also as a mighty preacher of the Word and a writer of high repute in religious literature, chiefly as editor of various papers.[2]

CARL GUSTAF LAGERGREN[3]

C. G. Lagergren was born in Östersund, Jämtland, Sweden, June 21, 1846. He received his early education in Sundsvalls Elementarläroverk, Östersunds Högre Elementarläroverk, and Östersunds Gymnasium, from which he graduated in 1869. After he had held a position as private tutor and later as instructor in Sundsvalls Elementarläroverk, he enrolled as student in the University of Uppsala in 1871, majoring in languages and philosophy.

Under the influence of a godly mother, Lagergren was converted at the age of sixteen, and was immersed at Indal, Medelpad, August 24, 1862. Always active in the church, it was not long before he was called, on the recommendation of Anders Wiberg, to become pastor of the Baptist church at Uppsala. It was while in this pastorate that Lagergren pursued studies at the University. In 1883, after a twelve years' ministry in Uppsala, he accepted a call to the Baptist church of Sundsvall, which was one of the oldest and most influential Baptist churches in Sweden. Here he remained until he came to America in 1889.

In both of his pastorates Lagergren became highly regarded locally as a wise pastor and leader and an eloquent and powerful preacher of the gospel, and also in wider circles throughout the whole country as editor and author, as a staunch defender of the New Testament faith as proclaimed by the Baptists, and as an enthusiastic leader and promoter of the temperance movement of that day. While in Sundsvall

[2] Sandell, *Minnesskrift,* 1914, op. cit., p. 24. See also Emanuel Schmidt, *Svenska Baptisternas i Amerika Teologiska Seminarium,* 1871–1921, pp. 33–34, 48–51.

[3] For a complete account of his life see *Från Strids-och Arbetsfältet,* Minneapolis, 1927; it is an autobiography of 547 pages. See also Hall, *Svenska Baptisternas Historia,* Vol. 11, pp. 130–134, and *Seminarie-Posten,* April–May, 1922.

he became the leader also of a progressive missionary movement and an extensive evangelistic enterprise which spread all through northern Sweden (Norrland), and even into Finland. Lay preachers were sent out far and wide, after having received a short-term Bible training in a school which Lagergren conducted.[4]

This was the man who in the fall of 1889 assumed leadership as dean of the Swedish Baptist Theological Seminary. He remained at his post for thirty-three years, or until the fall of 1922, when he retired at the age of seventy-six. It was not always smooth sailing, but Lagergren, as a born navigator, guided the seminary ship with an experienced and a steady hand. Economically, however, it was a rather quiet and carefree period until the separation from the Chicago University in 1912. For up to that time the University paid all the expenses of the school with the exception of the salary of the third teacher. Of a dogmatic temperament, in the good sense of that term, of scholarly habits, with invincible faith in the right and a fearless courage to attack what he considered wrong in faith and practice, Dean Lagergren exerted an influence upon the Swedish Baptist ministers in America, which has largely determined the sound development of the denomination.[5]

From early youth Lagergren had been busy with his pen, both as an editor and as an author of books and pamphlets. It was, however, after his retirement from active service at the Seminary that he found time to produce his two major works: "Bibelns Grundläror," (A Systematic Theology, 1255 pages, 1924), and "Från Strids-och Arbetsfältet. Minnen och iakttagelser från en sextiofemårig verksamhet, 1862–1927," (An Autobiography, 542 pages, 1927). His Systematic Theology, undoubtedly one of the most comprehensive works of its kind ever written in the Swedish language in America, sets forth in a scholarly and profound manner the results of his thinking and teaching throughout a long life.

C. G. Lagergren was blessed with a long life. For nearly twenty years after his retirement he lived and moved among the people he had served so faithfully and was honored and respected as "the grand old man" of Swedish Baptists. In his ninety-sixth year he quietly fell asleep in Jesus on October 27, 1941.[6]

---

[4] Backlund, *Swedish Baptists,* op. cit., pp. 111–113.

[5] See the author's article Educational Work among the Swedish Baptists of America in *Yearbook of the Swedish Historical Society of America,* 1926, pp. 125–140.

[6] *Annual,* Swedish Baptist Churches of America, Part 1, 1942–1943, pp. 113–114. See also *The Standard,* Oct. 30 and Nov. 6, 1941; and *Ebenezer,* 1942, pp. 109–112.

During the major part of the Morgan Park period, 1888–1914, there were two other men who ably assisted the dean as fellow-teachers. Both of them, like Lagergren, hailed from northern Sweden (Norrland), and both became brilliant educators and prominent leaders in the denomination.

ERIC SANDELL[7]

Like so many others of the early Swedish Baptist founders and pioneers, such as G. W. Schroeder, F. O. Nilsson, and J. A. Edgren, Eric Sandell was a sailor and spent his youth sailing the high seas. He was born in the city of Hudiksvall, in the province of Hälsingland, northern Sweden, January 26, 1856. His elementary training was gained in Sweden. In 1879 he was converted and joined the local Baptist church. The following year he emigrated to America. While among the Baptist people in Moline, he felt divinely led to give his life to the gospel ministry, and to prepare himself he matriculated at the Scandinavian Department of the Baptist Union Theological Seminary, graduating in 1884.

Then began a remarkable career as pastor and educator among the Swedish Baptists. His service comprised three pastorates: Second Church, Chicago, 1884–1887; Elim, Minneapolis, 1895–1899; and the Roseland Church, Chicago, 1899–1904. As teacher in the Seminary he served two different periods, 1887–1895, and 1907 until his death in 1918.

Eric Sandell had few equals. As far as his formal education was concerned, he was practically a self-made man. However, by reason of an extraordinarily brilliant, inquisitive, and alert mind, and with an amazing capacity for hard work, as well as an almost unlimited amount of self control and sustained concentration in his search for truth, he became one of the best informed persons in many different branches of knowledge in his day and generation. He became widely known as a philosopher and a profound thinker, undoubtedly the most prominent in the Swedish Baptist fellowship. His clear and logical presentation of the truth, both in the class room and in the pulpit, inspired by his love of God, will long be remembered as one of his unique characteristics. Indeed, he was a teacher and a pedagogue "par excellence." In debate he excelled and was in his right element. With great delight, but always in the sober interest of truth, he often accepted challenges to public debates with men of various opinions and beliefs, from ritualistic churchmen to atheistic scientists. His wide reading and phenomenal memory, together with his logical reasoning power and keen humor, always enabled him to use the weapons of his opponent to great advantage.

---

[7] *Från Skärgårds-Och Sjömansliv till en Märkesplats i Herrens Vingård,* Eric Sandells Liv och Verksamhet, Chicago, 1918. (A Biography, 255 pp.). See also Schmidt, op. cit., pp. 51–52; *Bethel Herald,* Feb., 1918, pp. 4–6, containing two articles on Sandell, one by G. A. Hagstrom, and the other by A. Liliemark; Articles in *Svenska Standaret,* Febr., 1918.

Sandell was a man of positive convictions. There was no "maybe," "probably," and "perhaps" in his vocabulary. He gave to God's Word its supreme place, and the message of the Crucified One was his theme. And yet, although he was a man of definite and outspoken convictions, he lived an extremely humble and Christ-like life. In one of his classroom lectures he said:

> I do not care how much my name is praised and honored after I have left this world; nor do I place much importance upon the raising of a large memorial stone on my grave. But if someone leaves my grave, and there falls a tear of gratitude from his eyes and he says, "Thank Thee God, that this man has lived," then shall I be satisfied.[8]

After a long illness this valiant hero of the cross, at the comparatively early age of sixty-two, went to be with his Lord on February 12, 1918.

OLOF HEDEEN[9]

Olof Hedeen was the third member of the notable Morgan Park trio. He was born in Sweden, at Undersåker, in the province of Jämtland, June 19, 1860. Having a high aptitude for learning, he found it easy to acquire an education. After preparatory training in Östersunds Elementarläroverk,. and after a conversion experience at the age of seventeen, he entered the Fjellsted School at Uppsala to prepare for the ministry in the State Church of Sweden. An additional year of study was spent at the University of Uppsala.

In the meanwhile it had become clear to the young and enthusiastic ministerial student that he could not with a good conscience enter the service of the State Church. Hoping to find the spiritual atmosphere of the Lutheran Church in America more to his liking, he emigrated in the year 1883. His first charge in the United States was the Lutheran Church at New Sweden, Maine. After a year of further studies at the Augustana Seminary, Rock Island, Illinois, Hedeen was ordained in

---

[8] *History of Bethel Theological Seminary,* p. 41.

[9] Hall, op. cit., pp. 135–139. Schmidt, op. cit., pp. 54–55. *Annual,* Swedish Baptist Churches of America, Part 1, 1936–1937, p. 101. Articles in *Svenska Standaret,* June and July, 1936. *Seminary History,* op. cit., pp. 42, 85.

1885 to the priesthood in the Lutheran Augustana Synod. While serving as pastor of the Lutheran church at Manchester, New Hampshire, 1885–1890, he discovered, after a careful searching of the Scriptures, the New Testament pattern of the church. This led to his immersion and affiliation with the Baptist fellowship. A five years' ministry in the Swedish Baptist church of Brooklyn, New York, 1890–1895, when the church experienced a sweeping revival, introduced almost over night the talented young convert from Lutheranism to the Baptist people in the whole country.

A wider field of service now claimed Olof Hedeen. In 1896 he accepted a call to become professor of Greek and New Testament Interpretation in the Morgan Park Theological Seminary. Here he remained eighteen happy and fruitful years, or until 1914, when the Seminary moved to St. Paul, Minnesota. At that time Hedeen returned to his first love, the pastorate, and ministered to the Emerald Avenue Church, Chicago, for seven years. In the meanwhile he also assisted as part time teacher in the Northern Baptist Theological Seminary. The last nine years of Hedeen's active life were probably the most strenuous. For then, 1921–1930, as general Mission Secretary, he had the whole country as his field. At the age of seventy-six, having enjoyed six years of retirement, he went to his eternal reward June 15, 1936.

Olof Hedeen was a brilliant and warmhearted teacher. Being of the emotional type, leaning toward Pentecostalism, he sometimes, as his heart became stirred, reached mountain tops of inspiration and eloquence both as a teacher and as a preacher.

Two other teachers belong to the Morgan Park period. N. N. Morten, who started to teach in the Seminary 1885 while it was located at Stromsburg, continued his ministry in Morgan Park until 1895. And W. A. Peterson was connected as a teacher with the Seminary for eleven years, 1895–1906. Both these men were effective educators.

THE ST. PAUL PERIOD 1914—

This is the fourth period in the history of the Seminary, and its second period of independence. The year 1914 became epochal in the history of Swedish Baptists, and it marks the beginning of a constantly enlarged educational front, as in so many other missionary projects, within the framework of the Baptist General Conference.

The reasons for moving the Seminary from Chicago to St. Paul a second time have been quite fully discussed from the General Conference point of view in Ch. Twenty-one and need not be repeated. The University of Chicago, which for so many years had supported generously the Swedish Department at Morgan Park, cut off this support in 1912. The school had to look elsewhere for its sustenance. And it most certainly proved true that "man's extremity is God's opportunity." The Spirit of the Lord stirred the Swedish Baptists to go forward, as the Israelites at the Red Sea, and enlarge their educational borders. Edgren's dream of having a well developed school plan, including an academy, and a college as well as a seminary, were to become a reality during this period. New buildings to house the growing school were to be erected, a constantly increasing staff of well qualified teachers was to care for the growing scholastic requirements, and an ever flowing stream of consecrated young people, well prepared both intellectually and spiritually, would continue to bring blessings to the four corners of the earth.

At the General Conference held in Duluth, Minnesota, in 1913, it was decided to move the Seminary to St. Paul and consolidate it with the Bethel Academy. At the same time it was decided to raise the scholastic requirements of the Seminary by extending the theological course to three years, based on a full academy or high school training.[10] In the Morgan Park period a high school preparation was not required for admission to the Seminary, but the four year course was divided into two years of preparatory work followed by two years of theological instruction. The Morgan Park plan was carried over for a few years for the benefit of the students transferring from that school and hence it was not until the spring of 1917 that the first student was graduated from the Seminary according to the new plan.

G. Arvid Hagstrom, at that time pastor of the First Swedish Baptist Church (Payne Avenue) of St. Paul, was called to become president of the newly organized school. C. G. Lagergren, then sixty-eight years old, was retained as dean of the Seminary, and A. J. Wingblade as principal of the Academy. Eric Sandell was prevailed upon to remain with the Seminary, even though his life was cut short after a few years. To complete the trio, David Gustafson joined the theological faculty in 1916. A new name was adopted for the combined schools, namely, Bethel Academy and Theological Seminary of the Swedish Baptist General Conference. One of the most important decisions of the Duluth Conference of 1913 was the placing of the school under the direct ownership of the General Conference.[11] In that respect it differs from most other so called church schools in the country, which are legally owned by a corporation of trustees.

---

[10] *Årsbok,* Svenska Baptistförsamlingarna inom Amerika, 1912–1913, p. 65.

[11] *Årsbok,* 1913–14, pp. 61–64.

BETHEL ACADEMY

Before proceeding further with the story of the combined schools, it will be necessary to account for the origin of the Bethel Academy which merged with the Seminary in 1914. As previously recorded, it was the plan of Edgren as early as 1884 to establish an academy and even a college. But it was not until 1903 that the plan really began to take shape. At the annual meeting of the General Conference that year at Stromsburg, Nebraska both Eric Sandell and Frank Peterson, two of the most far-seeing men of the denomination, urged, in their respective messages on the needs and promotion of missions, the establishment of an academy.[12] The time seemed to be ripe, and a committee was appointed to make a survey. The committee reported the following year in Kansas City, Missouri, and the Conference instructed its committee to proceed with the work and to organize an academy, to be located in Minnesota.[13]

It was a new chapter in the educational history of the denomination when, on October 2, 1905, Bethel Academy opened its doors for the first time. Arvid Gordh became the first principal and J. O. Backlund the second member of the original faculty. For the first two years the school found a temporary home in the Elim Baptist Church of Minneapolis. At the opening chapel service Joshua 1:1–9 was read, a passage which became prophetic of Bethel in a very special sense — a promise of success based on the Book. At the end of the first school year the secretary of the Board, Olof Bodien, gave a most encouraging report. Not less than 224 students had been enrolled, including 29 regular students in the academic department, 20 in the department of music, 70 in a special Bible Class, and 105 in Bible classes held in the various churches of Minneapolis and St. Paul.[14] This writer considers it an evident token of Divine Providence in his life to have had the privilege to join the student body of Bethel Academy that very first year. A site was purchased at Carter and Como avenues in beautiful North St. Anthony Park of St. Paul, upon which a school building was erected and dedicated in September of 1907.

---

[12] *Årsbok,* op. cit., 1903–1904, pp. 12, 34, 35. See also Backlund, *Swedish Baptists,* p. 115.

[13] *Årsbok,* 1904-1905, pp. 34–35.

[14] *Årsbok,* 1906, p. 60.

However, the young educational institution was not built without sacrifice. Its economic situation was far from easy. A certain influential group in the denomination insisted that the General Conference was not properly responsible for the creation of the Bethel Academy, neither, therefore, for its maintenance. This agitation tended to make its financial going very difficult.[15] But the Kingdom of God has always been built with heroic sacrifice. And in the case of Bethel the sacrifices yielded a rich spiritual harvest in the fact that from year to year an increasingly greater number of young people found within its halls the deeper life in God. A powerful spirit of prayer and missions prevailed. And down through the years the blessings have flowed, touching the whole world. An interesting example is the class of 1910. There were only four in that class. One, the lady member of the class, gave some twenty-five years of missionary service in Assam; another, due to ill health in the family, was forced home from the foreign mission field and has served God as a successful pastor at home; the third member, college teacher, foreign missionary, dean of Bethel Junior College and finally secretary of the Conference Foreign Mission Advance; and the fourth member of that class, for many years a teacher in the Seminary. After seven years of sacrificial service and wise leadership, Arvid Gordh closed his work as principal of the Academy in the spring of 1912, and was succeeded by A. J. Wingblade.

ARVID GORDH[16]

Arvid Gordh was born in Göteborg, Sweden, November 15, 1872. As a young man he followed the stream of Swedish emigrants and came to America, where Brooklyn became his first home. Here he was also converted June 12, 1892, and immersed into the fellowship of the Swedish Baptist Church July 3 the same year. Immediately upon his conversion, as it seems, he felt the call to preach the gospel, and, believing as he did in a thorough preparation, there followed an extended period of some nine years, or more, of theological training in the following institutions: Gordon Bible School, Boston; the Morgan Park Seminary; the Bethel Seminary of Stockholm, Sweden; Newton Center Theological Institution; and the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Undoubtedly it was at the Gordon Bible School, under the influence of the saintly A. J. Gordon, that Gordh in the early and formative years of his Christian experience caught a vision of the need of the Spirit-filled life, a subject which always received the major emphasis in his teaching and preaching.

---

[15] *Årsbok,* 1908–1909, pp. 49–52; 1909–1910, pp. 55–60. See also *Baneret,* Nov. 12, 1907; *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Sept. 10, 1907.

[16] *Annual,* Swedish Baptist Churches of America, 1940–1941, Part 1, p. 115. *The Standard,* Jan. 9, 1940 and other numbers; *Seminarie-Posten,* April–May, 1922; *Seminary History,* pp. 53–54, 83–84.

Gordh's life work was varied. For a few years he preached the gospel in Sweden. Having returned to America and upon the completion of his training, he became editor of "Baneret," a Swedish Baptist weekly published in Minneapolis. When he retired from the principalship of the Bethel Academy in 1912, he assumed the pastoral care of the Swedish Baptist church at Brockton, Massachusetts. This was followed by a charge in New York City, 1914–1922. But Bethel needed him again. In the fall of 1922 he succeeded C. G. Lagergren as dean of the Theological Seminary, in which capacity he served three years. He remained, however, as professor of Biblical Interpretation until his death on January 4, 1940.

As a personality Gordh was unique. He was quiet, reserved, thoughtful, sympathetic, and kind. Being a mystic by nature, he possessed the mystic's inner light in the things of God. At the same time, in clarity and profundity of thought he had few equals, especially in the Conference fellowship. Furthermore, he had that rare ability to express himself in clear and well chosen words — so well chosen indeed, that not one word seemed superfluous. All this and much more made him a teacher of distinction. Gordh, however, will be remembered most of all as the man who walked with God and who made the Spirit filled life attractive to others.

G. ARVID HAGSTROM[17]

The man called to be the president of the newly organized school was well qualified for his task. Hagstrom was born near the city of Sundsvall in northern Sweden (Norrland)[18] September 8, 1867. As a young child he came with his parents to the United States, settling first in Red Wing, Minnesota, and in Minneapolis the year 1872. The Twin Cities were to be his home for the major part of his life, during thirty years of which the whole country, in a certain sense, was his field of labor. At the age of fifteen he was won to the Lord, and joined the First Swedish Baptist Church of Minneapolis (Bethlehem), where his parents also were members. Under the aggressive leadership of his pastor, the youthful and evangelistic Frank Peterson, young Hagstrom soon caught the vision of "fields white unto harvest."

---

[17] *Seminary History,* op. cit., pp. 46–47, 88; Hall, *Svenska Baptisternas Historia,* op. cit., pp. 335–339; Schmidt, op. cit., p. 56.

[18] Norrland has given to Swedish Baptists many of their foremost leaders, such as Anders Wiberg, the great pioneer of Swedish Baptists, especially in Sweden; C. G. Lagergren, Eric Sandell, Olof Hedeen and Emanuel Schmidt of the theological faculty; G. Arvid Hagstrom, the first president of the united schools; Eric Wingren, the brilliant editor-theologian of Nya Wecko-Posten; Eric Rosen, long term pastor of the Emerald Avenue Church, Chicago, and successful promoter of Swedish Baptist charity work; and J. O. Backlund, for a generation Business Manager of Conference Press and editor of The Standard.

Hagstrom prepared himself for his life work at the Swedish Department of the Baptist Union Theological Seminary at Morgan Park, and was graduated with the class of 1892. It was a notable class, including a number of later denominational leaders and the well known foreign missionary, O. L. Swanson, commonly known as "the Billy Sunday of Assam." Having served as Sunday school missionary in Illinois a few years, Hagstrom assumed the pastorate in 1896, of the First Swedish Baptist Church of Chicago (Addison Street). He was at that time only twenty-nine years old, and the First Church of Chicago, being the largest in the denomination, had a membership of about six hundred. After ten years of an unusually successful, soul winning ministry, a wider field of service claimed him. And the next three years, 1906–1909, he, like Paul, was in "journeyings often," covering the whole General Conference area as Mission and Promotional Secretary. This position he held until he responded to a call, in 1909, to the First Swedish Baptist Church of St. Paul.

It was thus with a life rich in experience as a pastor and missionary administrator that Hagstrom took up the work as president of the combined schools, Bethel Academy and Theological Seminary, January 1, 1914. Here he gave twenty-seven years of his life, retiring in 1941, to the training of young men and women for Christian service. The work was not easy. There were many dark days, and days of uncertainty. Yet, through it all, the same faith that characterized the early leaders of the school did not fail, and Hagstrom, under God, led the school to success.

In addition to his many duties at the school as an administrator and teacher, Hagstrom found time to serve in numerous other capacities, not only within the General Conference fellowship but also the larger Baptist body represented by the Northern Baptist Convention. A variety of civic institutions and charitable organizations also claimed his wise counsel and leadership.

His talent for leadership and administration, his great capacity for work, the strongly evangelistic emphasis in his preaching, and his friendly attitude toward all people, including little children — these are some of the human factors in the successful ministry of G. Arvid

Hagstrom. And the great secret of it all, the basic factor, was a life touched by God!

Material Factors

An ideal location for the new school was secured in the spring of 1914, located midway between Minneapolis and St. Paul, directly across North Snelling avenue from the Minnesota State Fair Grounds. The property consists of two city blocks,[19] one being donated by Thomas Frankson, the owner of the entire surrounding section, while another block was bought from him at $7,500. It is of interest to note that the first building on the campus, the Seminary building, erected in the summer of 1914, was both planned and built by Swedish Baptist men. The architect J. O. Cedarberg, the general contractor, Charles Skooglun, and the plumbing and heating contractor, C. P. Dahlby were all members of the Payne Avenue Church, St. Paul.[20] It was a red letter day in the history of Swedish Baptists when on November 22, 1914, the new Seminary building was dedicated.[21] The following year there was constructed a three-story building — the Seminary building has two stories — to house the Academy, which was ready for occupancy in the spring of 1916. At that time the entire school property had an approximate value of $153,000, with a debt of $52,000. This was a remarkable achievement, in less than two years, for the comparatively small number of Swedish Baptists.[22] It is to be borne in mind, too, that they started their independent school work only two years before with practically empty hands. The debt, however, although not dangerously large, continued to be a burdensome factor for a few years. But with the aid of a special drive sponsored by the laymen of the denomination, all the needs were met. And at the Conference held at Worcester, Massachusetts in August, 1920, the secretary of the Board of Education, Adolph Holmer, reported that the entire mortgage on the school had been paid and that a certificate of title was now in the hands of the proper school officials. The Swedish Baptists then had a school property valued at $170,000, and all paid for. Through faith in God and hard work this had been accomplished in six years.[23]

---

[19] Very few realized in 1914 that the growth and expansion of the school would call for a larger campus. Hence nothing was done to acquire more land adjacent to the campus while it was still available.

[20] *Årsbok,* 1913–1914, p. 62.

[21] *Årsbok,* 1914–1915, p. 51.

[22] See the writer's address given at the 20th anniversary of G. Arvid Hagstrom, in 1934, as president of the school.

[23] Ibid. See also *Årsbok,* 1919–1920, p. 47.

Faculty Expansion

The Seminary faculty became sadly depleted by reason of the untimely death of Eric Sandell in February, 1918. Dean Lagergren and David Gustafson were practically alone, with the part time teaching assistance that President Hagstrom could render. The following year, in 1919, Gustafson resigned to go out as a missionary to China. At that time this writer was transferred from the Academy, where he had been teaching since 1915, to fill Sandell's place in the Church History department of the Seminary. The same fall, in 1919, Emanuel Schmidt, formerly president of Adelphia College, Seattle, Washington, was added to the Seminary staff in the field of the Old Testament. His term of service, however, was cut short by death after only a year and a half, in the spring of 1921. It is needless to state that the change of teachers, sometimes both frequent and unexpected, brought hardship on the remaining few members of the faculty, but at the same time afforded an enlarged sphere for service. For example, this writer, at one time or other, has taught practically all the subjects in the seminary, excepting Hebrew. In 1922 he was shifted from Church History to the chair of Systematic Theology which had been occupied by Dean Lagergren for thirty-three years.

For the Seminary it was a day pregnant with hope and inspiration when in the fall of 1922 it was the privilege to welcome two new teachers, both in their prime of life, well prepared and rich in experience. Arvid Gordh, the founder and first principal of the Bethel Academy, was chosen dean and professor of Biblical Interpretation, and K. J. Karlson became the head of the Church History Department.[24] President Hagstrom continued to teach in the field of Practical Theology. After three years Gordh resigned as dean, but remained as teacher until his death in 1940. K. J. Karlson assumed the deanship in 1925 and served continually in that capacity until his retirement in 1948, when he was replaced by Edwin J. Omark.

A further expansion was made in 1922 when the Bible and Missionary Training Department was added to the Seminary. The object of that department was to prepare young people for Sunday school and missionary work, primarily in the local church. Two years later, in 1924, Esther Sabel became the head of that department. In the meanwhile the Academy, too, experienced a healthy growth and development. The enrollment reached a peak of about three hundred in the middle nineteen-twenties. A. J. Wingblade continued as principal, and his brother, H. C. Wingblade, who in 1910 had become professor of English, remained in that position until 1938. Other teachers in the Academy with a long tenure of service are Effie Nelson, who joined the faculty in 1925, and C. E. Carlson, who became a teacher in 1927.

---

[24] *Årsbok,* op. cit., 1920–21, p. 72; 1921–1922, p. 49.

KARL J. KARLSON[25]

He was born in Skepperstad, Småland, Sweden, October 27, 1877, and was born again November 13, 1894. Two years later, July 9, 1896, he was immersed and united with the local Baptist church. After four years of training for the gospel ministry, 1899–1903, in Betelseminariet, Stockholm, he served for one year as pastor at Åmål, Sweden. Emigrating to America in 1904, he continued his education at Clark University, Worcester, Massachusetts, 1906–1912.

Karlson served as pastor in several of the New England churches: Manchester, New Hampshire, 1904–1906, where he was ordained February 10, 1905; Bridgeport, Connecticut, 1907; Worcester, Massachusetts, Harlem Street, 1908–1909; Portland, Maine, 1910; Gardner, Massachusetts, 1912–1913; Fitchburg, Massachusetts, 1913–1914; and Worcester Harlem Street again, 1916–1922. While at Fitchburg and Worcester he was also lecturer at Clark University, 1914–1922. At several periods he ministered as interim pastor to the Bethel Church, Minneapolis.

It was at Bethel Theological Seminary that K. J. Karlson was destined to perform his great and important life work. From 1922 he was professor of Historical Theology and Hebrew, and served as dean of the Seminary 1925–1948. He had just retired from the deanship, according to the school's retirement rule at the age of seventy, and had promised to continue as part time teacher, when an automobile accident ushered him into the presence of his Lord, September 14, 1948.

As a teacher and preacher of the Word, Karlson was both clear and profound, and always practical. As a friend he was the congenial Christian gentleman. In denominational boards, as well as in counselling churches and students, his practical wisdom and keen insight into the real nature of persons and situations became increasingly appreciated with the years. In 1948, the last summer he lived, he visited his native country as the official representative of the Baptist General Conference to the Baptist Centennial celebration in Sweden. That constituted a fitting climax to a useful life.

---

[25] *Annual,* Baptist General Conference of America, Part 1, 1949–1950, pp. 130–131. See also Olson, *Seminary History,* op. cit., pp. 54–55, 84; *Advance 1949,* pp. 124–126; *The Standard,* Sept. 23, 1948; *Seminarie-Posten,* April–May, 1922.

Continued Growth

For some years Bethel had sensed the need of further advancement if it was to keep pace with the growing demands in the educational world. The High School department was no longer serving the need that it once did; for nearly every town and hamlet had a fine accredited high school within easy reach of its boys and girls. Moreover, the scholastic standards had been raised considerably in the country as a whole, making a college training for young people as common as a high school education was a generation earlier. Naturally, therefore, it was a step in the right direction when it was decided by the General Conference in 1931 to begin a Junior College, which was opened the same fall.[26] Edgren's dream for the school some forty-five years earlier was gradually taking concrete form. Walfred Danielson, formerly head of the history department in the Academy, and for some years missionary to Assam, became the first dean of the Junior College. In his first report to the Conference, in 1932, the dean made the following statement relative to the object of the new department:

> Primarily we exist as a preparatory department for the Theological Seminary, and in doing this job properly we find ourselves equipped to care for applicants who seek to build a general Junior College foundation for more advanced studies that lead to specialization in other fields.[27]

Once again the scholastic requirements of the Seminary were raised to include the completion of at least two years of college training for all Seminary applicants. Both Danielson and the men who succeeded him in the office of the deanship, Emery Johnson, 1936, and C. E. Carlson, 1945, maintained a close cooperation with the University of Minnesota in order to achieve high scholastic standards. The Junior College gradually replaced the Academy which was finally discontinued in 1936.[28] About the same time the Bible and Missionary Training Department of the Seminary was moved to the College and its name changed to the Christian Workers' Course. In the fall of 1947 another advance was made when senior college work was offered for the first time.[29] Two years later a four year college had become a reality. As a result the next step seemed both natural and logical, namely, raising again the standards for admission to the seminary, requiring graduation from an accredited four year liberal arts college.[30] This lifted ministerial training among Conference Baptists to a level comparable to the highest and the best in the country. The Seminary then became a graduate school in the proper sense of that word.

---

[26] *Annual,* Swedish Baptist Churches of America, Part 1, 1931–1932, pp. 65–66.

[27] *Annual,* 1932–1933, Part 1, p. 57.

[28] *Seminary History,* op. cit., pp. 55–58.

[29] *Annual.* 1948–1949, p. 94.

The financial aspects also, though a rather difficult problem, made a slow but steady progress. This, under God, was due to several factors, such as the persistent work of President Hagstrom and his fellowworkers, as well as the constantly increasing number of graduates, well prepared both spiritually and scholastically, who went out to tell in words and deeds the story of Redeeming Love. Thus the churches more and more, as they realized that Bethel was paying rich spiritual dividends, responded to the needs of educational missions. An endowment fund had gradually taken form, and by 1924 it had reached the sum of $58,000. This was augmented through the General Conference Jubilee Fund of 1927. At the Conference of 1930, in St. Paul, the hearts of Swedish Baptists were cheered to hear that the school endowment fund had assets valued at $160,770.20.[31]

The economic depression of the early nineteen-thirties was weathered successfully although the school had to operate with a greatly reduced budget. A considerable portion of the endowment fund, like other investments in those years, went by the board. In fact, at times it even looked dark enough to threaten the very existence of Bethel. However, "man's extremity is God's opportunity." As Edgren so often had done in the pioneer days of the Seminary, President Hagstrom entered the chapel one morning and, having in a few quiet words related the serious situation, he suggested an all day prayer meeting. Faculty and students on their faces before God! It was prevailing prayer. The Lord was pleased to send the needed help.

The last decade has witnessed a singular advance both in the building program and the student enrollment. Three new dormitories, a library building and a gymnasium have been erected. The enrollment has reached an all time high of close to five hundred in the College and one hundred in the Seminary. The aggressive promotional man and assistant to the president, H. Wyman Malmsten, and the friendly H. C. Wingblade, who for some twenty seven years had served as professor of English in Bethel Academy and Junior College, and who succeeded Dr. Hagstrom as president of the School in 1941, have been favored with economically favorable times and with an increasing response from the churches.

---

[30] *Annual.* 1948–1949, p. 102.

[31] Olson, *Twentieth Anniversary Address,* op. cit., p. 3.

ADELPHIA COLLEGE[32]

On the west coast, in Seattle, Washington, Adelphia College, another Swedish Baptist school was started in the fall of 1905, the same year as Bethel Academy. A few prosperous business men sponsored the cause, and Emanuel Schmidt was elected president of the institution. Ambitious plans for the future included an academy, or high school department, a four year college, a school of theology, and a commercial department. Only two of those projects were realized, namely, a commercial department and an academy. A beautiful site covering nine acres of ground facing Lake Union was secured upon which two buldings, Adelphia Hall and Schmidt Hall, were erected. The work was carried on for a number of years, with a good enrollment of students and a well equipped faculty. But the institution fell on hard times. Several of those who had been depended on to back the school were caught in the financial reaction of World War I, and could no longer stand by as they had done.[33] As a result, Adelphia College, which at one time had seemed so promising, came to an end in 1918. That splendid property fell into the hands of the Jesuit Fathers, and "Finis" was written to the Swedish Baptist educational work in the Pacific Northwest.

---

[32] *Årsbok,* 1914–1915, pp. 65–66. *Nya Wecko-Posten,* June 27, 1905; June 22, 1909. *Yearbook,* Swedish Historical Society of America 1926, pp. 139–140. See also *Svenska Baptisternas Historia i Washington,* pp. 133–146; and Anna M. Swedberg, *A Short History of Adelphia College,* Seattle Washington (MS).

[33] Backlund, *Swedish Baptists,* op. cit., p. 117.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

"THE GOSPEL OF THE PRINTED PAGE"[1]

CHAPTER TWELVE contains an account of the beginning of Swedish Baptist periodical literature. In that connection it was observed that the Theological Seminary and the denominational papers constituted the two basic and most important factors in the planting and growth of churches. And in both cases it was Edgren who was the founder. None too early, either! For twenty-two years of Swedish Baptist history had rolled by when Edgren launched his second periodical "Zions Wakt" (The Watch of Zion) in the month of May, 1874. From that time the chain of denominational papers remained unbroken: "Facklan" (The Torch) 1876; "Evangelisk Tidskrift" (Evangelical Journal) 1877; "Nya Wecko-Posten" (The New Weekly Mail) 1885; "Svenska Standaret" (The Swedish Standard) 1911; and "The Standard" 1940.

It has also been recorded above (Ch. Twenty-one) how a distinctly denominational literature, owned and controlled by the General Conference, emerged in 1909. The object of this chapter will be to trace the further expansion of "the Gospel of the Printed Page," in periodicals, hymnals, and other books.

PERIODICALS

To provide good reading material for the Sunday school children became a concern of the pioneers comparatively early. "Duvoposten" came first, published by Eric Wingren, the editor of Nya Wecko-Posten, from 1887 to 1895, when it was sold to the American Baptist Publication Society and merged with "Barnens Tidning."[2] In 1909, as seen above, the General Conference secured a publishing house of its own, and at that time the name of the Sunday school paper was changed to "Söndagsskolan och Hemmet," which was replaced in 1926 by "Our

---

[1] *Jubileumsboken,* op. cit., 82.

[2] *Årsbok,* Svenska Baptisternas i Illinois Söndagsskolförening, 1894–1895, p. 11. For a complete account of publications see C. Geo. Ericson, 40 Years Publishing Good Tidings, Advance 1950, pp. 19–34.

Youth." "Our Juniors" and "Our Little Folks" were added in 1931. In 1948 the names of these three papers were changed to "Youth Today," "Crossroads" (in 1949 changed to "Search"), and "Children's Hour."

The specific needs of young people were not neglected either. In the early nineties there was aroused an unusual interest in organized young people's work. Several state unions were formed, the Illinois Young People's Union being the first, organized October 2, 1892.[3] As an outgrowth of such activity, the need was recognized for a paper that would voice the young people's opinions, give them a clearing house for ideas and in general create interest in spiritual matters.[4] The forerunner in this class of papers was "Ungdomens Baner," which began in the fall of 1892 and continued about three years. Headed by a group of Chicago pastors and leaders, including such well known names as P. A. Hjelm, C. G. Lagergren, Eric Rosen, and G. Arvid Hagstrom, the next venture in the field of young people's papers, under the name of "Ungdomens Tidning," was launched April 1, 1896. Although a private enterprise, it came near to becoming a Conference owned publication. Young people's societies were encouraged to submit to the paper reports of their activities, and it included in its editorial policy a great amount of material from the mission field, designed to increase the interest of young people in missions. Sometime in 1897 the responsibility for the publishing of the paper fell upon E. Sibiakoffsky. He relinquished the editorship to A. A. Holmgren in October of 1898, who moved the place of publication from Chicago to Burlington, Iowa, where he served as pastor.

Journalistic activities among Swedish Baptists continued to grow and expand. In 1898, the same year that Holmgren assumed responsibility for the publishing of "Ungdomens Tidning," John E. Ekstrom and Robert Larson projected another paper, by the name of "Fyrbåken," which aimed to serve the young people in particular. Its format was that of a sixteen page magazine. In the meanwhile Holmgren felt constrained to enlarge the ministry of "Ungdomens Tidning" from being specifically a young people's paper to "A journal devoted to the interest of the Young People, Family, Church and Prohibition."[5] It changed from the large magazine size of "Ungdomens Tidning" to that of an ordinary newspaper type. The name of the paper was also changed, its new name being "Baneret," and the place of publication was moved to Minneapolis in 1902. The following year "Fyrbåken" consolidated with "Baneret," which was then made into a weekly. For several years "Baneret" made a strong popular appeal, especially in the Middle West, and was well edited by such men as Arvid Gordh, Eric Sjostrand, J. O. Backlund, and J. W. Hjertstrom. However, like so many other journalistic ventures, it never quite succeeded in getting on a self-supporting basis (Nya Wecko-Posten was an exception in that respect), and finally, in 1911, it had to suspend publication.[6]

---

[3] Hall, op. cit., p. 334.

[4] Paul D. Anderson, *A History of the Publications that Have Served the Baptist General Conference of America,* Graduation Thesis, Bethel Seminary 1950, p. 24.

[5] Ibid., p. 26. See also Masthead Statement in Baneret.

Two other young people's papers in due time made their appearance among Swedish Baptists. The first one was "Ungdoms-Stjärnan," which was started in November 1907 with Erik Sjostrand as editor and the American Baptist Publication Society as publisher. Two years later the paper was purchased by Arvid Gordh who in turn, at the end of 1910, transferred the ownership to the General Conference. Under the new management it was developed into a full-fledged denominational weekly, known by all Conference Baptists as "Svenska Standaret," later "The Standard."[7] "Ungdoms-Stjärnan" under Gordh's editorship, was a paper of exceptionally attractive quality, in its literary beauty, its artistic arrangement and, above all, in its choice selections of reading material especially aiming at a consecrated and Spirit filled life.

In the process of the Americanization of foreign speaking groups, the language problem became an important factor. Churches and denominations, both locally and in their combined missionary endeavors, including literary projects, were vitally affected. As far as Swedish Baptists are concerned, however — and others had similar experiences — the language problem did not become acute until the grandchildren of the pioneers had become an important element in the churches. Shortly after the turn of the century, English gradually began to be used, side by side with the Swedish, as a church language. By 1917 "Svenska Standaret," the official organ of the General Conference, felt the time was ripe to introduce in its pages a Young People's Department in English. For nearly a decade and a half that seemed to fill the need. However, in October, 1931, by Conference action, a new paper, "The Baptist Evangel," made its appearance. It was a monthly periodical, combining the qualities of a young people's paper and a general denominational journal, especially for the exclusively English reading members in the churches. Nevertheless, for a small denomination to support two papers proved in the end too costly, and a happy solution was found in the merging of the two papers, "Svenska Standaret" and "The Baptist Evangel," in the year 1940 under the new name "The Standard."

---

[6] Backlund, *Swedish Baptists,* pp. 95–96.

[7] J. O. Backlund, Det Tryckta Ordets Evangelium in *Jubileumsboken,* 1927, pp. 82–93.

Besides the above mentioned young people's papers, there were several others of a more general nature which also had a short life span. In 1888 a sixteen page religious magazine appeared under the name "Trons Seger." This periodical was published in Chicago at first but, after two issues, it was moved to Minneapolis.[8] Eric Halvarson was the editor and J. M. Shulene the associate editor. Undoubtedly due to financial difficulties, the paper had to cease publication in December, 1890. A. G. Hall claims that in character the paper was "ultra spiritual and ultra chiliastic."[9]

Another venture in the denominational newspaper field was made in 1889 when A. G. Hall and Allfrid Sjolander undertook to edit and publish "Missionsbladet." This paper was transferred to L. J. Ahlstrom in 1892. In the meanwhile two New England pastors, Axel Tjernlund and J. W. Hjertstrom, had started a weekly by the name "Östra Wecko-Posten." The intention evidently was that this paper should become the voice of the Swedish Baptists in the eastern states, much as "Nya Wecko-Posten" had become the voice for the Chicago area, and "Missionsbladet" for Minnesota. However, the constituency proved too small to support three papers, and it soon became clear that "Nya Wecko-Posten" could not be crowded out by any competitor.[10] In the course of years it had become entrenched in the hearts and minds of Swedish Baptists. "Östra Wecko-Posten" found the going too difficult, and it was soon purchased by "Missionbladet," and the subsequent publication adopted the rather pretentious name "Svenska Baptisternas Tidning." Evidently it hoped to become the spokesman for all the Swedish Baptists. But the financial crisis of 1893 came, creating a difficult situation for the new venture. Consequently that paper, too, had to yield to the inevitable and folded in 1896.[11] It deserves recording, however, that even though its life was of short duration, "Missionbladet" made some very valuable contributions to Baptist faith and life. Since its first editor A. G. Hall was a historian of no small stature, which was also true of L. J. Ahlstrom, it was natural that Swedish Baptist history would receive a prominent place in the paper. True to its name, "Missionbladet" (Missionary News) also carried much news and material regarding missions.

---

[8] Paul Anderson, op. cit., pp. 20–21.

[9] Hall, op. cit., p. 272.

[10] Paul Anderson, op. cit., p. 23.

[11] Or 1895. Compare Hall, op. cit., pp. 272–273; Backlund, *Swedish Baptists*, op. cit., p. 95; Backlund, Litteraturen och den religiösa verksamheten, in *Midvinterboken* 1920, pp. 78–88.

In a class of its own among Swedish American periodicals was "Hemmets Vän," a monthly magazine with an average of eighty pages, published for two years, 1903–1904, by Emanuel Schmidt and John Rosene. In literary beauty this journal was exceptional. And that could be expected, for its editor, Emanuel Schmidt, had a rare taste for poetry and literature in general. The fact that he had received "honorable mention" from the Swedish Academy, a society composed of eighteen of the most prominent authors of Sweden, for his translation into Swedish of Longfellow's "Hiawatha,"[12] is an evidence of more than ordinary attainment in the field of literature. In contents, too, "Hemmets Vän" was different and of a high order. It varied all the way from poetry and fiction to biblical interpretation and archeology, homiletics, religious education, theology, philosophy, and church history. The arrangement of the material and other journalistic features were attractive and artistic. In short, the periodical was both spiritually and intellectually very stimulating. However, the publishers were better writers and editors than business executives, and after two years of financial troubles "Hemmets Vän" went the way of many another journalistic ventures.

As has been recorded, of all the various privately owned Swedish Baptist periodicals only one, "Nya Wecko-Posten," survived for a longer period of time. If it is correct to include its immediate forerunner "Evangelisk Tidskrift," it can be said that "Nya Wecko-Posten" had a continuous existence a little better than forty years, 1877–1918.[13] There are at least two creative factors which can be posited for its success: first, the business acumen and editorial genius of the editor, Eric Wingren; secondly, the contents of the paper supplied to an extraordinary degree the theological and spiritual needs of the average Swedish Baptist.

In due time, however, a denominationally owned and controlled journal appeared, which was destined to live and succeed. The origin of that venture is partly related earlier in this volume.[14] It was indeed fraught with rich meaning for the future, when, in 1908, at the suggestion of the Nebraska delegation the previous year, the General Conference appointed a Committee on Literature and charged that committee to explore the possibility of publishing a denominationally owned paper. The time seemed to be ripe and things moved rapidly. For the very next year, at the General Conference held in Manistique, Michigan, September, 1909, the Literature Committee was authorized to purchase the Swedish Department of the American Baptist Publication Society, including a number of books and the Sunday school paper "Barnens Tidning." The transaction was consummated December 1, 1909.[15]

---

[12] J. E. Kingberg, *Litteraturhistoriska Studier,* 1932, p. 68.

[13] See Chapter Twelve.

[14] See Chapter Twenty-one.

That was a good beginning. But the more important step remained to be taken. For many years previous to its appearance in 1911 the Conference had sought the solution that "Svenska Standaret" was destined to give. The particular need was for a periodical which, in a more inclusive and impartial way, might serve as a clearing house of ideas for the whole Swedish Baptist fellowship and be the official voice of the General Conference more distinctly than, in the very nature of the case, a privately owned journal could ever be. The committee first turned to the flourishing "Nya Wecko-Posten," making an offer to its editor, Eric Wingren, to purchase his paper. His reply was brief and to the point: he had received no sign from the Lord to surrender his task of many years.[16] With that door closed the committee investigated the possibility of taking over "Baneret," the second so called denominational periodical at that time. Its publishers, The Baneret Publishing Company, were willing to sell, but apparently the price was too high. Hence, no action was taken.

At that juncture, however, another door opened. Arvid Gordh, the principal of Bethel Academy, had published and edited "Ungdoms-Stjärnan" for nearly two years. Being overwhelmed with work, he offered to sell his excellent little paper to the General Conference on very liberal terms.[17] The transaction was consummated in the fall of 1910, and "Svenska Baptist Standaret," as the original complete name was, made its first appearance, as the official organ of the General Conference, in January, 1911. To begin with, it was a monthly, but it was soon changed to a weekly periodical. With Erik Sjostrand, a journalist of several years' experience, and backed up by the whole denomination, the future of "Standaret" appeared reasonably assured. The number of subscribers gradually climbed, reaching 2,222 in the fall of 1912.[18] Moreover, it enjoyed the advantage of being a direct creation of the General Conference and it was supported by that organization as its official voice in all denominational matters. The major factor, no doubt, in favor of "Standaret" was the fact that it was not dependent upon the fortune or failure of any one man. That had been the chief weakness of all the private periodicals, and would soon prove the termination of the only remaining rival of "Standaret," "Nya Wecko-Posten."[19]

---

[15] *Årsbok,* 1908–1909, p. 63; 1909–1910, pp. 61–66.
[16] *Årsbok,* 1908–1909, p. 61.
[17] *Årsbok,* 1910–1911, p. 96.
[18] *Årsbok,* 1911–1912, p. 94.

But the disadvantages and difficulties with which "Svenska Standaret" had to contend in its infant years often raised the question as to whether it really could survive. There was "Nya Wecko-Posten," tested and tried through the years in the field of religious journalism, as a most powerful and influential competitor. In fact, it is safe to say that no single person in the whole history of Swedish Baptists had wielded a stronger influence upon the denomination than had Editor Wingren through his paper. It simply could not be crowded out of the field. And for a small denomination to support two periodicals, the prospects were poor indeed.

A second disadvantage which often neutralizes the effectiveness of any denominationally owned and controlled paper, and in which "Standaret" shared, more or less, with similar journals, is the fact that the editor has to be the voice of a whole denomination. In his efforts to please all he may sacrifice independence of thought and private convictions and tend to become colorless. A case in hand was the first editor, Erik Sjostrand. His views on the atonement were somewhat at variance with those of the editor of "Nya Wecko-Posten." Sjostrand was not the kind of person who would compromise or remain neutral. Hence he expressed his view of the atonement in no uncertain terms in several leading articles in "Standaret." A controversy over the atonement ensued between the two papers, in which "Nya Wecko-Posten" was supported by some of the foremost theologians in the denomination, and, no doubt, by the rank and file of the people as well.[20] The result was that Sjostrand was retired in 1917, and replaced by Waldemar Skoglund. Undoubtedly the change was for the better.

In the growth and development of the denominational press, as well as in all other aspects of Swedish Baptist history, one can clearly discern the guiding hand of a kind Providence. The health of the much beloved veteran editor of "Nya Wecko-Posten" began to decline as he had reached his middle seventies. By 1918 almost total blindness set in, forcing him to lay aside his work of a long life. He was then willing to relinquish his paper for a settlement with "Standaret." The first issue of the combined papers came off the press February 17, 1918, the names of the two papers appearing in the official title for a number of years. One can only reflect what might have happened had the two periodicals continued to exist, more or less as rivals, side by side. Undoubtedly it would have constituted a real threat to the unity of the denomination. That turned out to be the case among the Baptists in Sweden, where two seminaries and two papers with somewhat different emphases finally caused a division in the fellowship.

---

[19] Paul Anderson, op. cit., p. 42.

[20] See articles, very numerous, in *Nya Wecko-Posten* and *Svenska Standaret,* 1914–1917.

After fourteen years of successful editorship, Waldemar Skoglund, who was exceptionally well qualified both from a spiritual and journalistic point of view, was succeeded in 1931 by J. O. Backlund. He was no stranger, for over a period of years, as school man at Bethel Academy, editor of "Baneret," and pastor of churches — Strandburg, South Dakota, Boston, Massachusetts, and Stromsburg, Nebraska — Backlund had endeared himself to the whole family of Swedish Baptists. In 1918 he had begun his useful career in the service of the General Conference, as business manager of the Conference Press and associate editor of "Svenska Standaret." Manifold additional duties he had willingly assumed from time to time, such as the office of financial secretary and treasurer of the General Conference Missions department, financial secretary of the Consolidated Budget, corresponding secretary of missions, and recording secretary of the General Conference, 1915–1945. His was a life rich in experience, a brilliant and well trained mind, a philosophic comprehension of important issues, and an attitude characterized by fairness, kindness, and good judgment, all of which Backlund shared with the thousands of readers of "Svenska Standaret" from week to week. In 1945, at the age of seventy, he surrendered his mandate as editor to a younger man, Martin Erikson. By reason of good training, an alert mind and of the imaginative kind, and a fruitful ministry as pastor of leading Conference churches, such as Isanti South, Minnesota, Moline, Ill., Brockton, Mass., and Payne Avenue, St. Paul, Erikson came well prepared for his new task. The constantly increasing list of subscribers and readers is a good indication that Conference Baptists look with favor upon "The Standard," which, under the new editor while retaining the evangelical traditions of the fathers, has been popularized both in contents and format.

Another long time service in the Publication Department is that of C. Geo. Ericson. He joined the staff of "Svenska Standaret" as associate editor in 1923, later also assuming the responsibility of editorship of the various Sunday School publications. In 1940 he added to his other duties that of manager of the Baptist Conference Press. Being a vigorous personality and full of new ideas, Ericson labored zealously at a difficult task to make Swedish Baptists publication-minded.

Through the years "Svenska Standaret" continued to grow in the favor of the denomination. By 1940 it was found expedient to merge the two denominationally owned papers "Standaret" and "The Baptist Evangel." On September 3 of that year the new paper under the name "The Standard" made its first appearance. It was changed from the full-sized eight-page Swedish newspaper of "Svenska Standaret" to a tabloid-sized eight-page English language paper, with a four page Swedish supplement optional to subscribers. By means of "The Standard Budget Plan," adopted in 1940, the paper reaches every home and every member in the local churches, which in increasing numbers are adopting this practical plan. The promotional aspects of "The Standard," of course, are absolutely essential to the other departments of the General Conference missionary program. In its other features, too, the paper, from week to week, becomes the voice of God and the voice of His people, urging its thousands of readers to faithfuly carry out the Master's Great Commission. Its circulation at the beginning of 1952 passed the 15,000 mark.

HYMNALS

As has been noted in an earlier chapter, Gustaf Palmquist, the founder of Swedish Baptists in America, was a musician and a gifted song writer. After his return to Sweden from America in 1857, Palmquist, together with his brother Per, conceived the idea of publishing a hymnal to replace the older books used by the "läsare" (the revival people) of the country at that time. In 1859 they published the first edition of "Pilgrims-Sånger." This was the first songbook published by Swedish Baptists. Six months later an enlarged edition appeared, containing 314 hymns. All groups of believers, including those still in the established church, received the book gladly. It was used on both sides of the Atlantic up to the close of the nineteenth century by most Swedish Baptists. The financial proceeds of the publication made its author independent of assistance from any mission society, a fact which gave him much satisfaction and joy.[21]

So far as is known, John A. Peterson, who in 1874 served as pastor of the Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, published the first hymnal among Swedish Baptists of America. The name of this hymnal was "Sions Basun," and it was probably published some time in the seventies. Second in order came A. P. Ekman's "Nya Pilgrims Sånger" (New Pilgrim Songs), which, as the name would indicate, was meant to be only a supplement to Palmquist's "Pilgrims-Sånger," and contained fifty hymns. The year of publication was 1887 in Stromsburg, Nebraska. The following year, Editor Wingren compiled and published "Fridsbasunen," which served the churches for several years. Then the American Baptist Publication Society published "Valda Hymner" and "Triumfsånger," the former for the general church services, and the latter for use in Sunday schools and young people's organizations.

---

[21] Ahlstrom, *Swedish Baptists in Iowa,* pp. 315–316.

In Ch. Twenty-one it was stated that the 1902 Golden Jubilee introduced a new era in the history of the General Conference. The time had come to consolidate and expand the work. Hence, in the first decade of the new century, there was a marked advance along several lines: philanthropy, missions, education, and literature. A venture of the greatest consequence, and one that touched the spiritual life of the rank and file of the Swedish Baptist people in a most intimate way for more than a generation, was the publishing of the hymnal "Nya Psalmisten" in the year 1903. This was the first publishing attempt on a large scale undertaken by the General Conference. The book contained 675 hymns, which in selection and arrangement have hardly, if ever, been surpassed by any other hymnal in either Swedish or English. "Nya Psalmisten" had a large collection of the old and loved Pilgrim songs which had accompanied the Baptist pioneers as they built their homes in the New World. The melodies of those hymns had touched their hearts in early childhood and had lifted again, in praise and adoration, thousands of the old timers, as well as their children and children's children nearer to God. In addition to the old and familiar songs, there was a good selection by the best Swedish-American hymn writers, such as A. L. Skoog, N. Frykman, Olof Bodien, and others. Moreover, the collection was enriched by a great number of translations from other languages, particularly the English, including the best of the tested and tried gospel hymns.[22]

The songs are distinctly grouped according to subject matter in a logical and topical order. For example, hymns of worship, number 1–11; God, 12–42; Christ, 43–103; the Holy Spirit, 104–124; salvation, 125–238; Christian life, 239–344; prayer and praise, 345–395; the church, 396–477; Christian service, 478–530; songs for special occasions,

---

[22] See Förord to *Nya Psalmisten.*

531–571; the last things, 572–661; and temperance and patriotic songs, 662–675. The committee that planned Nya Psalmisten was composed of seven exceptionally talented Swedish Baptist leaders, including the editor-theologian E. Wingren and the poet-preacher, Olof Bodien. The hymnal was edited by A. L. Skoog, who probably was the foremost song writer and composer of sacred music among Swedish-Americans. It is no wonder that such a song book met with hearty and generous response from the whole denomination. It was used by all the churches until recently when the Swedish was eliminated as a church language. "Nya Psalmisten" was published in many editions and proved to be a successful business enterprise, which is commonly true of any hymnal that attains a wider circulation.

Other song books were published from time to time. A smaller hymnal, containing 278 hymns, called "Fridsröster," and designed primarily for use in the Sunday schools and at young people's and prayer meetings, came from the press in 1910. This book contained 28 songs in English. In 1925 "The New Hymnal" was prepared and published for use where a hymnal in English was required. And last but not least, "Gospel Hymnal," published in 1950, and containing 448 of the best evangelical hymns, including twenty-six translations of the best loved songs of Swedish origin, promises to become a worthy English companion to "Nya Psalmisten." It has received very favorable endorsement from prominent leaders in several other denominations.

AUTHORS

Swedish Baptists cannot boast of many authors. J. E. Klingberg in a pamphlet[23] lists forty-two names, to which, of course, could be added many more, were one to include all the pastors who have written histories of local churches.[24] However, the authors of major works are comparatively few, hardly a dozen, and these can conveniently be placed, according to the subject matter dealt with in their books, in three main groups, namely, theology, history, and missions.

Chronologically, and probably in importance also, the name of John Alexis Edgren, comes first. As has been previously recorded, he was the founder both of the theological seminary and the denominational papers. However, in addition to his labors as pastor, teacher, and editor he found time to write a number of books mostly on theological subjects, some twenty titles in all. His "Biblisk Troslära" (Fundamentals of Faith, translated by J. O. Backlund), "Bibeln, Guds Bok" (The Bible, the Word of God), "Bibeltolkningens Lagar" (The Laws of Biblical Interpretation), "Epiphaneia, A Study in Prophecy," and "Evangelium Enlight Matteus" (A Commentary on Matthew's Gospel), his five major productions, and many other worth-while works, all testify to his untiring zeal and his painstaking scholarship.[25] In Edgren's literary achievements there is a humble and yet colorful and realistic element of autobiography which serves as a beautiful frame to his productions.

---

[23] J. E. Kingberg, *Litteraturhistoriska Studier,* 1932.

[24] Such histories of which there are nearly two hundred in printed form, and almost as many in manuscript, preserved in the archives of the Swedish Baptist Historical Society, constitute most valuable source material.

In the class of theological authorship, C. G. Lagergren was a worthy follower of Edgren, as he also succeeded him in the deanship of the theological seminary. Throughout his long life, spanning ninety-five years, he was very productive. At least twenty-five different publications, many of these in pamphlet form, came from his pen. His two major works are "Bibelns Grundläror" (The Main Doctrines of the Bible), in four volumes with 1,255 pages, and "Från Strids-och Arbetsfältet" (An Autobiography), with 542 pages. "Bibelns Grundläror" is a monumental work, and undoubtedly one of the most complete of its kind ever published in the Swedish language.[26] The point of view is largely Calvinistic. Lagergren's thirty-three years of class room experience as professor of Systematic Theology, have come to their full fruition in this book. His autobiography is a very interesting story, especially the first part which deals with his youth and early manhood when he shared persecution with his fellow Baptists in Sweden for the sake of his faith. Incidentally it is of interest to know that Lagergren was the first Baptist in Sweden to receive a university education after he had become a Baptist. Moreover, that volume also contains the author's interpretation of the theological seminary with which he was connected for a whole generation.

The third writer in that group was editor Eric Wingren. Most of his editorials for thirty-eight years in "Evangelisk Tidskrift" and "Nya Wecko-Posten" are of a theological nature, both profound and practical. One of his favorite doctrines was the second coming of Christ, and in his volume "Kristi Tillkommelse och De Yttersta Tingen" (The Coming of Christ and the Last Things), he deals very successfully with that subject from the premillennial point of view. As a publisher, too, Wingren was unusually productive, publishing a great number of books in translation, as well as tracts, of both a theological and practical nature.[27]

---

[25] Backlund. *Swedish Baptists,* p. 100. Klingberg, *Litteraturhistoriska Studier,* pp. 16–20.

[26] Klingberg, op. cit., pp. 32–36.

In the field of denominational history, in addition to the histories of local churches, there are at least a half dozen writers who have produced work of a more comprehensive scope. In the forefront of this group of authors is A. G. Hall, who published in 1899 and 1900 a comprehensive work in two volumes known as "Svenska Baptisternas Historia." The first volume, with 426 pages, deals with the Baptists in Sweden, and volume two, 480 pages, with the Swedish Baptists in America. Since Hall was pioneering in the field of Swedish Baptist history, and that with much labor and sacrifice, he performed a piece of work of inestimable value to the denomination. The first volume was more successful, telling, as it did, the romantic story of the pioneer Baptists in Sweden, their persecutions and sufferings in their heroic struggle for religious liberty and their glorious victories in great and sweeping revivals. The second volume, however, is more of a collection of brief biographies of Swedish Baptist preachers in America than an orderly history of the group as a whole. Lack of reliable source material is evident, and the work suffers from the lack of a logical arrangement and a clear historical perspective.

When L. J. Ahlstrom, in 1876, came from Trade Lake, Wisconsin, to study in Edgren's seminary, the kind professor advised him to return to the farm. He appeared to be so weak and puny physically that he would never make the ministry. However, that young man lived to reach the ripe old age of ninety-one. And he became a Baptist historian, too, of no small dimensions. Ahlstrom's first major historical production was published in 1924 under the title of "Femtiofem År i Vestra Wisconsin. Historiska Skildringar" (Fifty-five years in Western Wisconsin. Historical Tales). It is a realistic account of Swedish Baptist pioneer missionary work in that part of Wisconsin, including the interesting story of the frontier missionary, F. O. Carlson. The book, 380 pages, bears the characteristic marks of an eye-witness who had been intimately related to most of the events of the narrative, and the author's phenomenal memory for historical details adds realism to the story. His second work is a comprehensive volume of 479 pages dealing with "Eighty Years of Swedish Baptist Work in Iowa," 1853–1933. In addition to a rather detailed history of the Iowa churches, it contains realistically written biographies of the following founders and pioneer preachers: Gustaf Palmquist, Anders Wiberg, F. O. Nilsson, Robert E. Jeanson, and Frank Peterson. In Ahlstrom's last book, a biography of "John Alexis Edgren, Soldier, Educator, Author, Journalist," he undoubtedly reached the zenith of his literary productions. This volume of 223 interesting pages presents, in a clear historical style, a many-sided picture of Edgren as an integral part of the seminary which he founded. The biography of the Seminary founder, which in reality was long overdue, was published in 1939, the centenary year of Edgren's birth. The author, who was one of the early students in Edgren's school and withal an admirer of his great teacher, was the right man for the task.

---

[27] Ibid., p. 79–82.

From his early youth, J. O. Backlund has been a prolific writer. In addition to his work as editor he succeeded in finding time to enrich the denominational literature with a number of valuable contributions. Foremost among these are his "Swedish Baptists in America," a brief history of 160 pages, published in 1933, and "A Pioneer Trio," off the press in 1942. The latter was a biography of the three Swedish Baptist founders: F. O. Nilsson, Gustaf Palmquist, and Anders Wiberg.

In 1898 Gustavus W. Schroeder published "The Swedish Baptists," a volume of 316 pages. As recorded in an earlier chapter, Schroeder is commonly believed to be the first Swedish Baptist, having been immersed in New York City in 1844. From him in a direct line can be traced the Swedish Baptist movement both in Sweden and in America. His book could not properly be called a history of Swedish Baptists. However, in addition to a number of interesting personal experiences relative to the origin of the Baptist movement in Sweden, it contains several fragments of the religious history of Sweden all the way from the coming of Ansgar, the first Christian missionary to Sweden in 829, down to the "läsare" movement in the nineteenth century.

P. Lovene distinguished himself both in the field of Baptist history and Baptist faith or doctrine. His "History of the Swedish Baptist Churches in Kansas and Missouri 1869–1927" is a factual and well prepared account of Swedish Baptist work in those states. "Kristi Församling och Hennes Instiftelser" (The Church of Christ and her Ordinances) and "Dopets Nytta och Betydelse" (The Benefit and Meaning of Baptism) are two companion volumes which compare favorably with anything written on those subjects. His "Distinctive Baptist Principles" is constantly reaching a wider circulation, having recently been published in a revised edition.

In the course of years it has been the privilege of Swedish Baptists to send out a large number of foreign missionaries. In addition to their evangelistic work, in which they have excelled, several have also been very productive both in Bible translations and in the creation of a mission literature in general. Foremost in that group stands Eric Lund. He was the pioneer among Swedish Baptist foreign missionaries of Sweden, having left in 1877 to preach the gospel in Spain. In 1900, after the Spanish-American war, when the Philippine Islands had been opened to Protestant missionaries, Lund was engaged by the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society to begin Baptist missions in that country. Lund's literary labors were Herculean. Due to his linguistic achievements he has been called "the William Carey of Swedish Baptists." It would be impossible within the scope of this chapter even to name the titles of all his productions.[28] Suffice it to say that he wrote books and pamphlets in seven different languages: Swedish, English, French and Spanish, besides three different native dialects of the Philippine Islands, numbering some two hundred titles, both original and translations. They covered all sorts of subjects, historical and theological predominating. His most permanent contribution undoubtedly is the translation of the four gospels and the Book of Acts into the Samaran tongue, the New Testament into the Cebuan, and the entire Bible into the Panayan language — these three languages representing as many Philippine tribes.

Of the Swedish Baptist foreign missionaries who went out from America, Ola Hanson was the first one to become known in wider circles. He began his work in Burma in 1890, and it was a service that covered almost forty years. Being a brilliant student and a profound and original thinker, it was only natural that his literary productions would be of a high order. Most of Hanson's writings are in the field of missions, and in three different languages — Swedish, English, and Kachin, the latter being the language of the people in Burma with whom he labored. In Swedish he wrote the following books: "Tankar och Bilder från Missionsfältet" (Thoughts and Pictures from the Mission field); "Vad är Grunden för Vårt Odödlighetshopp?" (What is the Basis for our Hope of Immortality?); and "Vandringar i Österlanden" (Wanderings in the Orient). In the English language he produced a large "Kachin-English Dictionary" of 800 pages, "Handbook of the Kachin Language," and "The Kachins, Their Customs and Traditions," 225 pages. His chief works in the Kachin language are "A Kachin Grammar," "A Reader for Beginners," "A Hymnal" containing 364 hymns, and, most important, "Translation of the entire Bible" into the Kachin tongue. Before all that could be accomplished,

---

[28] Klingberg in *Litteraturhistoriska Studier,* pp. 41–53 has a fairly complete list.

Hanson performed the stupendous task of creating a written language for the Kachin people![29]

Another missionary author was Eric Schugren who began his missionary labors in South India in 1907. He wrote books in Swedish, English, Spanish, and Telugu. Telugu is one of the larger language groups in India, comprising some thirty million people. The following is an incomplete list of his productions: "Bland Telugerna" (Among the Telugus), "Seen and Heard in India," "Den Stund I icke Menen" (The Hour Ye Know Not), and a translation of The Old and New Testament into Telugu.[30] O. L. Swanson wrote one book with the title "In Villages and Tea Gardens. Forty-three years of Missionary Work in Assam."

Of younger missionaries, the Sword brothers have written at least one book each. Gustaf Sword wrote "Come What May," which is a brief story of missionary experiences among the Kachins in Burma; and Victor Sword wrote "The Baptists in Assam," setting forth basic facts in the history of Baptist work in Assam.

This chapter would hardly be complete without a brief word about a few other writers. P. Ryden, for many years a pastor in Minnesota, wrote in 1918 "Svenska Baptisternas i Minnesota Historia" (A History of Swedish Baptists in Minnesota), 275 pages. "En Dalason. Levnadsteckning Över Pastor O. Bodien" (A Son of Dalarne. Biography of Pastor O. Bodien) is an unusually sympathetic life story of the silver-tongued Minneapolis pastor. A number of short stories, most of them with the motif taken from pioneer days of Swedish Baptist history, also came from the facile pen of Ryden. And finally there are at least three who may be classified as poets of some magnitude, namely Carl O. Dahlen, C. R. Osbeck, and Olof Bodien, the latter a hymn writer of ability, several of whose songs were included in "Nya Psalmisten."

[29] Ibid., pp. 27–29.

[30] *A History of Bethel Theological Seminary,* 1871–1946, p. 129.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

THE GOSPEL IN ALL THE WORLD

CHRISTIANITY is essentially a missionary religion. The Master's Great Commission: "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations" will ever remain the marching orders of the church militant. When it ceases to reach out after new fields to conquer for Christ, it disintegrates and dies or degenerates into a corrupt world church.[1]

> It pleased God to make the Baptist denomination and Baptist men and women the leaders in the modern missionary movement. That leadership has never been relinquished and we hope it never shall. William Carey and Adoniram Judson are the most illustrious in missionary history since the Apostle Paul. In accomplishment Carey, and in suffering Adoniram and Ann Hasseltine Judson, have never been excelled.[2]

The Swedish Baptists, too, like their brethren in the larger fellowship, have always been a missionary people. In the records of the early churches there are frequent references to missions, making it perfectly clear that the pioneers had a keen interest in spreading the gospel in every land. For the first three decades that interest expressed itself mainly in prayers and contributions of money. True, the poverty of the people necessarily limited their giving. But it was a sacrifice of love because first they had given themselves to the Lord. After Eric Lund, in 1877, had begun his missionary work in Spain, several local churches, as for example in Moline, Illinois, and in New York City,[3] organized Spanish mission societies for the support of that work.

The first great wave of missionary enthusiasm, resulting in the going forth of men and women as evangels to distant lands, was that created in the late eighties by the zealous Swedish missionary evangelist Frederik Franson. His impassioned appeals fell with compelling power upon the ears and hearts of consecrated young people in the churches to which he had access.[4] Numbers of them, especially in some other denominations, offered themselves for immediate service and went forth particularly to China and Japan. Indirectly, at least, that movement affected the Swedish Baptists also and stirred them to action. The time was ripe for the foreign missionary movement to launch out.

---

[1] N. C. Parsons, Our Contribution Overseas, in *Jubileumsboken,* p. 200.

[2] Ibid., p. 201.

[3] *Evangelisk Tidskrift,* 1881, p. 175 and 1882, p. 19.

[4] Parsons, op. cit., pp. 202–203.

JOHANNA ANDERSON

This Minnesota girl was the first one in a long line of Swedish Baptist foreign missionaries. She was born at Nyed in the province of Värmland, Sweden, October 2, 1856, and came at an early age with her parents to the United States and settled at St. Cloud, Minnesota. After training in the local Teachers' College, she taught school in Clear Lake, Becker, Snake River, and St. Cloud. In the meanwhile she was a very active church member, and primarily so in every phase of missionary work. A saintly mother had dedicated Johanna to the foreign missionary task, and the young lady was not disobedient to the heavenly vision calling her to tell the story of Jesus in lands beyond the seas.[5]

Having been appointed for missionary service in Burma by the Woman's American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, Johanna sailed for her field September 29, 1888. She was stationed at the mission school at Toungoo, where she served the Lord as a teacher during her first term. In 1897 her first furlough became due, and she returned to the United States. Due to ill health she was forced to tarry at home several years. Finally, in 1903, her physician gave his consent for her to go back to Burma. At the farewell reception arranged by the Bethlehem Church of Minneapolis, the frail missionary praised God for His grace in permitting her to return to those who were groping in the darkness of heathenism. "The mere thought of it," she said, "causes me to sing to my very finger tips."[6] Her days, however, were numbered. Only a few months more in Burma, and the first Swedish Baptist foreign missionary entered the haven of rest, December 2, 1904.

Johanna Anderson was a sweet singer and musician, a talented teacher, and a zealous and kind soul winner. In a gathering of friends in St. Paul, Minnesota, shortly after her arrival from Burma, tired, sick and worn out, she was asked, "Johanna, has it paid?" Johanna was silent for a while, and then she began to relate some facts about her first visit to Loikaw, which was an almost inaccessible Karen village in the mountain jungles of Burma. The village had only one Christian, a young boy who had been led to Christ in Johanna's school.

---

[5] Agnes M. Gordh, "En Herrens Tjänarinna, *Ungdoms-Stjärnan,* Feb. 1910, pp. 13–16. See also letter June 3, 1949, from The Woman's American Baptist Foreign Mission Society; and letter May 24, 1949, from Ebert Johnson, St. Cloud, Minn., whose mother was a cousin to Johanna Anderson.

[6] *Ungdoms-Stjärnan,* op. cit., p. 15.

The rest of the people were extremely wild and ragged and dirty. But God's grace reached down into the hearts of those savages. They repented and believed and were saved. A little later a church was organized there. When the faithful missionary visited them before her return to America, there were one hundred and twenty-seven redeemed souls who promised to pray for her. With tears of joy Johanna Anderson closed her remarks with the humble and emphatic statement, "Certainly it has paid, and I must return to Burma."[7]

The last decade of the nineteenth century was a remarkable period in the history of Swedish Baptist foreign missionary work. Including Johanna Anderson, who began her service in Burma in 1888, there were at least sixteen people sent forth from the General Conference churches before the dawn of the twentieth century. That is a significant number, considering the fact that the foreign missionary movement in the denomination was in its infancy, and also that the combined membership of the churches was hardly twenty thousand. Some of these early missionaries, too, distinguished themselves by extraordinary achievements in their respective fields, and became household names in every Swedish Baptist home. Those messengers of the cross embarked for distant shores in the following order: Mr. and Mrs. Ola Hanson to Burma, 1890; Erika Bergman to South India, 1891; E. A. Nelson to Brazil, South America 1891, and Mrs. Nelson who joined him two years later; Mr. and Mrs. Martin Ekvall to China 1892; Mr. and Mrs. O. L. Swanson to Assam, India, 1893; C. A. Sahlquist to China 1893, and Mrs. Sahlquist who accompanied him four years later; Carl F. Wiking to China 1893; Hilda Johnson (later Mrs. A. L. Bain) to Congo, 1895; Violetta R. Peterson to Burma, 1898; and Gerda Paulson to Japan, 1899. Most of these, though not all, went out under the auspices of The American Baptist Foreign Mission Society.[8] About the same time that the Swedish Baptist foreign missionary movement began, there appeared on the home front a missionary statesman of large stature whose name became intimately associated with all phases of denominational work.

FRANK PETERSON

As a small boy in 1854, he stood on the banks of the Mississippi at Rock Island, Illinois, and watched Gustaf Palmquist immerse his father in the river. Tears came to his eyes, for he thought that his dad was put under for good.[9] Seventy-three years later that boy, then in his eightieth year, delivered a most eloquent historical address at the Swedish Baptist Diamond Jubilee in Chicago 1927. During the major part of the time between these two events, his life had been very intimately related to Baptist world-wide missions, and more particularly as it centered in the General Conference fellowship.

---

[7] Ibid., pp. 13–14.

[8] *Jubileumsboken,* op. cit., pp. 203–206. See also Hall, *Svenska Baptisternas Historia,* op. cit., p. 390; Lovene, *History of Swedish Baptist Churches in Kansas,* pp. 13–15; *Annual,* Swedish Baptist Churches of America, 1939–1940, p. 116; and *Nya Wecko-Posten Kalender,* 1912, pp. 147–155.

Frank Peterson was born November 19, 1847, in the province of Östergötland, Sweden. In 1852 he came with his parents to America, and Rock Island, Illinois, became their first dwelling place in the New World. Two years later the family moved to Village Creek, Iowa, where Frank was converted and baptized into the membership of the local church in the spring of 1861.[10] As a boy of sixteen in response to the call of Abraham Lincoln for volunteers, he enlisted in the Ninth Iowa Cavalry and served in the ranks to the end of the Civil War. At the end of the war he learned the trade of stonecutter. Later he taught school, first in Iowa near his home, and in the early seventies, after he and his people had settled on a homestead in Worthington, southwestern Minnesota, he became the first school teacher in that area. His mother's kitchen was the schoolroom. Previous to that, Peterson had pursued studies in the old Chicago University, 1870–1871, with the practice of law in view. But the Lord had another plan for his life. A gracious revival visited the Worthington settlement where a little Swedish Baptist church had been formed in 1873. Several of the people in the community were Peterson's relatives, and many others were his neighbors and friends from Village Creek, Iowa. Since he was the moving human spirit in the revival, it was only natural that the believers would urge him to become their pastor. A saintly woman of the group pleaded with him, saying:

> Frank, you must not leave us. You have prayed for and with all these converts; you have spoken words of hope and promise to them in their spiritual distress; - - - and you have baptized them all. You must not leave us; you must stay. It is the will of God.[11]

Her words seemed like a call direct from God. And, instead of a legal career, Frank Peterson turned to the Christian ministry. That was in

---

[9] *Life of Frank Peterson,* pp. 5–6.

[10] It is probable that his baptism took place in 1862, even though Frank Peterson in his autobiography gives the year 1861. See pp. 16–18. But Peterson's father writing to "Evangelisten," Stockholm, Sweden, February 10, 1862, states that the great revival took place in the winter of 1862. Following that the baptism took place.

[11] *Life of Frank Peterson,* p. 72.

1875. The following year he left his spiritual children at Worthington and spent the school year 1876–1877 at Edgren's Seminary in Chicago. In the meanwhile he served as student pastor of the Second Baptist Church of that city. Back with his friends on the prairie in southwestern Minnesota in the fall of 1877, he labored there with signal success until the spring of 1881 when he responded to an urgent call from the First Swedish Baptist Church of Minneapolis. The nine years of that pastorate were exceedingly fruitful. Being an attractive and popular speaker, a talented organizer and a zealous evangelist, Frank Peterson had the joy of seeing between eight and nine hundred new members added to the church.

In 1890 the service of foreign missions claimed the popular Minneapolis pastor. He was appointed district secretary of the American Baptist Missionary Union (The American Baptist Foreign Mission Society). From that time until his death in 1929, Peterson held important secretarial positions with the various American Baptist missionary organizations. His powerful influence in firing the churches with zeal for foreign missions, and his work in discovering and encouraging volunteers for the fields, can hardly be overestimated.[12]

As an organizer and leader in the Swedish Baptist fellowship, where, in his old age, he was lovingly known as "the grand old man" of the denomination, Frank Peterson held many important positions of leadership and trust. Thus, to mention only a few, he served as the Swedish Baptist representative on the Board of Trustees of the University of Chicago, 1892–1912; as chairman of the Board of Bethel Academy, 1905–1914, and the same office in Bethel Institute (Bethel Academy and Theological Seminary) 1914–1929. Active in Kingdom work up to the very last and preserving his contagious and youthful enthusiasm and optimism throughout his long life, the missionary statesman entered into eternal rest on July 30, 1929, in his eighty-second year.[13]

OLA HANSON

If I were a young man and could begin my life over again, I would give my life to the service of foreign missions. I would ask to be sent to the Kachins. In fact, I would like to live my whole life over again and live through these experiences once more.[14]

---

[12] Backlund, *Swedish Baptists,* pp. 85–86; Parsons, *Jubileumsboken,* p. 203.

[13] *Årsbok,* Svenska Baptistförsamlingarna i Amerika. Part I, 1930–1931, pp. 92, 93.

[14] Gustaf Sword, *Ola Hanson — An Apostle to the Kachins.* Bulletin of Bethel Institute, July, 1938, p. 3.

Thus spoke the noted foreign missionary Ola Hanson in 1920 when he was home on furlough after thirty years of successful work among the Kachins of Burma. That man, from several points of view, the greatest of Swedish Baptist foreign missionaries, was born at Åhus, in the province of Skåne, Sweden, June 25, 1864. At the age of seventeen he emigrated to America, and located at Oakland, Nebraska, where he found Christ and joined the local Baptist church. For two years, 1884–1886, he studied at the Swedish Baptist Theological Seminary, then located at St. Paul and in Stromsburg, Nebraska, and completed his theological preparation at Hamilton Theological Seminary, New York, 1887–1890.

In the summer of 1890 Ola Hanson with his wife, under appointment of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, sailed for Burma, where it was their privilege to preach the gospel for nearly forty years among the wild and savage Kachin hill tribe. Immediately he threw himself with all his might into his threefold task of translating the Bible, of preaching the gospel, and of establishing schools. But, first of all, he had to learn the difficult Kachin language, and then reduce it to writing. There was none to show him how to begin, and there was not a book to which he could turn. He heard the wild Kachins utter the most unusual sounds. It was his task to catch these sounds, learn to understand them, and then reduce them to letters that other people could read and write. Very few people can imagine the difficulties he faced, and what a stupendous piece of work it was. However, patience and persistence prevailed, and after a few years Hanson had collected about 25,000 words, every one of which he carefully explained in his well edited dictionary.[15]

After the groundwork had been thus laid, Hanson's most important contribution to the Kingdom of God could begin, namely, the translation of the sacred Scriptures into the Kachin language, indeed a most exacting task.

> There are thousands of Kachins in Burma today who joined with him in praise to God that his life was spared long enough to complete the translation of the Bible. It was a great day in his life and in the history of the Kachin mission, when, in 1928, he laid his hand to the finishing of the last line in the prophet of Malachi. The task that he had been working at more or less for nearly forty years was finally finished. What a sense of satisfaction, what a deep joy must have been his! No wonder he called Mrs. Hanson to the desk, while he and she and his faithful Kachin assistant

---

[15] Ibid., pp. 7–8. For a more complete list of his books, see Ch. Twenty-four, also Hall, *Svenska Baptisternas Historia,* Vol. II, pp. 391–396. *Årsbok,* Svenska Baptistförsamlingarna i Amerika, Vol. I, 1930–1931, pp. 96–97.

kneeled down as he poured out his heart in thanks and praise to God who had spared his life and permitted him to finish the work.[16]

But Ola Hanson was not the kind of man who was satisfied to spend his entire time in his secluded study. He gladly denied himself the comforts of home as for weeks at a time he toured the hills, traveling from village to village, preaching and teaching the gospel and helping the needy people. Although in frail health, especially in later years, he had a great capacity for work. He would start work in his office at six o'clock in the morning and continue without a break, except at mealtime, throughout the day. At times the tropical heat would be terrific, a heat that would sap the strength of even the strongest. But the missionary worked on in order to complete his God-given task. And yet, Hanson was not the rugged type of man. On the contrary, there was something delicate, refined, reticent, and highly sensitive in his personality. He was a poet and philosopher with a tendency to idealism.[17] Gustaf Sword, his fellow-laborer and successor in the Kachin Mission continues so beautifully:

> He was keenly sensitive to nature, to music, and to anything that was beautiful; he was in a corresponding measure pained by the ugly, the coarse, and the filthy things of life. (The Kachins are lazy and exceedingly dirty). - - - Yet I must say that Dr. Hanson is one of the few that kept his first love, his faith, his character of a gentleman, his passion for missions unimpaired. At home or in the jungle, alone or in company, he would never forget that he was a Christian. He would never allow himself to become slovenly in dress and habits. During the nine months we shared house and table, I cannot remember him sitting down to the dinner in a careless manner. Even though we were in the jungle he would take his daily bath, change into fresh clothes for the evening, and dinner would be an occasion for valuable conversation and for restoring to us the consciousness of our high calling as missionaries, as servants of Christ and as gentlemen.[18]

Such was Ola Hanson, the distinguished missionary and "apostle to the Kachins," who passed away quietly to be with the Lord on October 17, 1929, in his sixty-fifth year.

O. L. SWANSON

"Oscar, you must go out and preach the gospel to the heathen." Those were the words of an old saint, Mrs. Bodelson, in the Moline, Illinois, Swedish Baptist church, who quietly had gone in to listen to young O. L. Swanson teach his first class of boys in the Sunday school. The surprised Sunday school teacher said: "If she had wielded a bolt of lightning it would not have frightened me more. I tried to forget her words."[19] A few years later, when Swanson pursued studies in the Seminary, the call to missions was further confirmed as he had the opportunity to listen to John E. Clough, pleading for twenty-five new missionary families for his field in South India. Clough was the leader in a great revival in which not less than 2,222 converts had been immersed in one day at one of his stations. Having heard that appeal, Swanson had his face set toward the rising of the sun.

---

[16] Sword, op. cit., pp. 9–10.
[17] Ibid., p. 4.
[18] Ibid., pp. 4–5.

O. L. Swanson was born at Rångedala, in the province of Västergötland, Sweden, February 11, 1867. As a young boy he came to America, and located at Moline, Illinois. There he was converted at the age of fourteen and immediately became active in the church. After his graduation from the Seminary in 1892, he served two small churches near Chicago, Sycamore and De Kalb, for a year. In 1893 God opened the way for O. L. Swanson and his wife to begin their life-long service, under appointment of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, in Assam, India. Theirs was an unusually rich and blessed ministry which lasted forty-three years, or until 1936 when the Swansons retired.

The first five years were spent in two different stations, one of them being located on the North Bank of the Brahmaputra. In 1898, however, Swanson moved to Golaghat in the immediate area of which there lived some 350,000 souls without a single missionary. Having a creative and very fertile mind, he was not satisfied to follow the old ruts in missionary work. When the people refused to come to the appointed meeting place, he determined to take the gospel to "the crowded ways of life," and introduced bazaar preaching which up to that time had never been tried in Assam. There, at the bazaar or market place, the fiery and enthusiastic missionary would reach hundreds and thousands with the message of God's redeeming love. The converts were carefully trained in Bible classes, and some eighty or more churches were organized in the Golaghat field.[20] For Swanson was not only a great evangelist, but he was a wise organizer as well. The first Baptist Association in Assam was a product of his organizing genius.

---

[19] O. L. Swanson, *In Villages and Tea Gardens,* An Autobiography, p. 22.

[20] *Annual,* Baptist General Conference of America, 1950–1951; pp. 127–128. See also Hall, op. cit., pp. 402–407; and *Seventy-five Years,* Bethel Theological Seminary, p. 109.

The chief secret of this unusual missionary career undoubtedly lies in regular habits of early morning Bible study and prayer. In the words of one of the younger missionaries in Assam, all of whom knew him as "Dad Swanson":

> I knew him best as a man of prayer. In the bungalow, on the veranda, and in camp, wherever he was, he would rise early while it was still dark, turn up the wick and study the Word. And on his knees he prayed. He talked to God before he talked to men.[21]

O. L. Swanson had a burning passion for missions, and primarily for the people in Assam. During his furlough at home he was constantly on the lookout for new recruits, and several young people, being touched by the warmth and contagious enthusiasm of Swanson, laid their lives on the altar of foreign missions. By nature of a very energetic and restless spirit, he could not endure to live in retirement. He claimed that he was like an old car that had been "re-tired" and would be good for many more miles. And thus, in his eightieth year, accompanied by his wife in the second marriage, he set out, in 1947, for Assam, the land of his love. There, for two years more, he preached again in the market places, and used every opportunity in private conversations to help people to know and to love Christ. His voice was stilled in death on July 17, 1949.

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE PIONEERS

In the footsteps of the pioneers, there followed a large and noble band of men and women whose hearts God had touched, thus making them willing to serve Christ in distant lands. In fact, the spirit of missions so powerfully prevailed within the ranks of Swedish Baptists that it was estimated in 1927, at the time of the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations, that approximately one in every five hundred members was a foreign missionary. The Protestant churches at large, on the other hand, are sending, at the very highest estimate, only one member in two or three thousand.[22]. In 1927 there were more than fifty Swedish Baptist missionaries in the service of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, while some thirty more, who either had died or for some reason or other had retired, had formerly served as missionaries of the same society. In addition, at least sixteen missionaries held appointment under other boards.[23]

---

[21] *Annual,* Baptist General Conference of America, 1950–1951, p. 128.

[22] R. H. Glover, *The Progress of World-Wide Missions,* 1924, p. 83.

[23] C. George Ericson, *Svenska Standaret,* Aug. 23, 1927, p. 4.

Only an incomplete list of the names of the noble company of missionaries is possible in this work. Heading the roll, at the turn of the century, there was the mighty Eric Lund, the "William Carey among Swedish Baptists,"[24] who founded the Baptist work in the Philippine Islands.

> When he landed at Iloilo, in the island of Panay, May 3, 1900, he found a field white for harvest. The people were more than ready to listen to the gospel. Not long after he began preaching in the market place at Jaro, a committee from the interior brought a statement signed by nearly 8,000 persons, to the effect that they wished to abandon the Roman Church and become Protestants.[25]

A church was soon organized at Jaro, and also an industrial school for boys, which later developed into the Central Philippine College. A Bible school at Iloilo became another educational center of importance. Lund being a linguist of unusual ability, undoubtedly made his greatest contribution to missions on the Philippine Islands in the area of translation and production of Christian literature. Within an incredibly short time he had translated the whole Bible into the Visayan language, and parts of the Bible into two other dialects. Thus the foundation for Baptist work in the Philippines was laid deep and strong.

Following Lund there were some ten Swedish Baptist missionaries, in the service of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, who in the first decade of the twentieth century embarked as messengers of the cross to foreign lands. William Axling went to Japan, 1901; Anna V. Johnson to the Philippine Islands, 1903; Mary E. Danielson to Japan, 1902; Dr. and Mrs. Hjalmar East to Burma, 1904. East was the first medical missionary among Swedish Baptists. Because of ill health, however, he was unable to return to the field after his first term. Mr. and Mrs. N. C. Parsons went to South India in 1906; Mr. and Mrs. E. O. Shugren to South India in 1907. Schugren distinguished himself both as a linguist and, preeminently, as a successful evangelist. Esther Lindberg went to Burma, 1908.[26]

Not less than twenty-one young people, members of Swedish Baptist churches, entered foreign missionary service in the years 1910–1920: Dr. and Mrs. Hjalmar Ostrom, medical missionaries, took up work in Belgian Congo, 1911; Leontine Dahl went to China, 1912; Mr. and Mrs. J. E. Tanquist to Assam, India, 1912. The latter, recently retired, were privileged to spend about thirty-five years in Assam engaged in fruit-bearing evangelistic work as well as in extensive translation projects. Selma Lagergren became a missionary to the Philippine Islands, 1913; Oliva Johnson, the first graduate of Bethel Academy to become a foreign missionary, to the Philippine Islands, 1913; Dr. and Mrs. Jonas Ahlquist to Assam, India, 1917. Dr. Ahlquist, like Luke, was a "beloved physician," who radiantly ministered to both the physical and spiritual needs of the Assamese people. An automobile accident in 1941 terminated that successful ministry of nearly twenty-five years. Lily Ryden went to Burma, 1917; Esther Hokanson to China, 1917; Mr. and Mrs. L. A. Lovegren to China, 1917; Elam Anderson to China, 1917; Edna Oden to Belgian Congo, 1918; Anna M. Hagquist to Belgian Congo, 1919; Mr. and Mrs. David Gustafson to China, 1919; Mr. and Mrs. Albert Dahlby to Assam, 1919; and Dr. Rudolph L. Crook to China, 1920.[27]

---

[24] See Chapter Twenty-four concerning Lund's literary labors.

[25] Henry C. Vedder, *A Short History of Baptist Missions,* pp. 295–296. See also Helen Barrett Montgomery, *Following the Sunrise,* pp. 255–258.

[26] *Svenska Standaret,* August 23, 1927.

An encouraging factor in the annals of Swedish Baptists, not to boast of but to humbly praise God for, is the story of their zeal and devotion through the years, to the cause of missions. A singular increase of missionary interest prevailed in the nineteen-twenties, when the rather impressive number of thirty-one Swedish Baptist young people laid their lives on the altar of service for the Master in foreign fields. There was the optimistic and talented Gustaf Sword who, with his wife, in 1921 settled in the Kachin Hills of Burma and became fellow-laborer of, and later successor to, Ola Hanson. His brother, Victor Hugo Sword, and his wife went to Assam in 1921; Henry Erickson to Belgian Congo, 1921; Mr. and Mrs. John Selander to Assam, 1921; Esther M. Nelson to Burma, 1921; Victoria Christenson to Assam, 1922; Mr. and Mrs. Martin Engwall to Belgian Congo, 1923; Mr. and Mrs. Walfred Danielson to Assam, 1923; Esther Nelson to China, 1924; Dr. and Mrs. A. C. Osterholm to Belgian Congo, 1925; Mr. and Mrs. Bengt Anderson to Assam, 1926. In that part of the Naga Hills assigned to the Andersons, many thousands of wild head hunters have turned to Christ. For several years that area was the most fruitful in the number of conversions of all the northern Baptist foreign mission fields. Mr. and Mrs. August Berg went to Bengal Orissa, India, 1926; Esther Ehnbom to Belgian Congo, 1926; Emily Satterberg to Belgian Congo, 1928; Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Erickson to South India, 1928; Mr. and Mrs. Eric Frykenberg to South India, 1929; Vendla Anderson to Belgian Congo, 1929; Signe Erickson to the Philippine Islands, 1930. She came from that comparatively small

---

[27] American Swedish Baptists in Missionary Service, July, 1937. pp. 12–15.

Conference church in Warren, Pennsylvania, which also sent out John Selander and Bengt Anderson. She became the first martyr of Swedish Baptist missionaries, being killed by the Japanese with ten other Baptist missionaries in 1942. Astrid Peterson went to China, 1930; and Linda Erickson Watkins to Belgian Congo in 1930.[28]

In the depression years of 1931–1940 a slump occurred, especially with respect to the number of missionaries who entered the service of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society. However, that was the experience in that period of practically all denominational societies. But many of the interdenominational societies, often, though not always correctly, known as "Faith Boards," seemed to have prospered even in those lean financial years. The reasons for that, which were several, cannot be discussed here. Suffice it to say that a considerable number of Swedish Baptist young people were appointed by such boards, and went to various parts of the world with the tidings of salvation. In the period of the thirties there were at least twelve from Swedish Baptist churches sent out by the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society. These included Ada Nelson to China, 1931; Elsie Larson to South India, 1931; Elna Forssell Avey to Assam, 1932; Mr. and Mrs. Reuben Holm to Assam, 1932. The Holms were supported by the Swedish Baptist young people. Linnea Nelson went to China, 1935; Grace Cooper to Belgian Congo, 1935; Almyra Eastlund to Assam, 1937; Dr. and Mrs. Oliver Hasselblad to Assam, 1938; and Mr. and Mrs. Franklin Nelson to Burma, 1939.

A partial list of missionaries in the service of other societies during the last twenty-five or thirty years, includes the following names: Mr. and Mrs. Victor Renius, China; Mr. and Mrs. E. N. Nelson, East Africa; Edith Anderson, Abyssinia; Selma Bergsten, Ethiopia; Hulda Bjorkland, South Africa; Florence Nystrom Collins, Japan; Esther Bodin, Belgian Congo; Mrs. Esther Jeunette, French Equatorial Africa; B. S. Finstrom, India; Mr. and Mrs. Aleck Olson, Nigeria; Mildred Olson, East Africa; Richard Paulson, French Equatorial Africa; Mr. and Mrs. N. G. Pearson, French Equatorial Africa; Mr. and Mrs. Erhardt Swenson, Argentina; Margaret Ahlquist, Tibet; Alma Gahm Shadduck, South Africa; August B. Holm, Brazil; Kenneth Bystrom, South America; Joyce Johnson, East Africa; Mr. and Mrs. Melvin Swanson, South Africa; and Mrs. John Rees, Brazil.

Five more Swedish missionaries were appointed by the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society in the five years that preceded the

---

[28] *Svenska Standaret,* Aug. 23, 1927. See also *Swedish Baptists in Missionary Service,* op. cit., pp. 12–15; and *Annuals,* General Conference, 1920–1930.

General Conference Foreign Missions Advance in 1945. Mr. and Mrs. Herman Tegenfeldt went to Burma in 1941. The Tegenfeldts, however, are partially supported by the General Conference. Dorothy Asplund went to South India; and Mr. and Mrs. John Anderson to Assam.

The sum total of Swedish Baptist foreign missionaries in the years 1888–1945 adds up to not less than 122. If records were available for every Conference missionary in that period, it is safe to assume that the final number would come close to the one hundred fifty mark. What a wonderful grace God has bestowed upon the comparatively small fellowship of Swedish Baptists in giving them the privilege to send out to dark heathen lands such a large company of messengers of the gospel of light and love! To Him alone be the glory! To be sure, Swedish Baptists did not fully support financially all the missionaries who were members of their own churches. Nevertheless, statistics prove that contributions were considerably larger than is generally assumed. Thus, for example, in the Conference year 1908–1909, the Swedish churches gave the sum of $9,000 to the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society. At that time five missionary couples and six single missionaries held appointment in said society.[29] In 1915 the Swedish Baptist churches contributed to the same society the sum of $15,087.64 for the support of five missionary couples and thirteen single missionaries.[30] For the Conference year 1922–1923 the records show $33,000 given to the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society toward the support of twelve missionary couples and fifteen single missionaries.[31] And in the year 1926 the Swedish Baptists gave to foreign missions $43,143.49.[32]

Moreover, it should be borne in mind in order to have a reasonably adequate picture of the whole situation, that the Swedish Baptist churches, out of their limited resources, gave to the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, in addition to their monetary contributions, that which cannot be measured in silver and gold. Well over one hundred men and women from Swedish Baptist churches have labored or are still laboring under appointment of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society[33] in foreign missionary service. And these missionaries belong in the front ranks for talent, consecration, and achievement. Who but God can evaluate this contribution?

[29] *Årsbok,* Allmänna Konferensen, 1910–1911, p. 31.

[30] *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Oct. 3, 1916.

[31] *Årsbok,* 1922–1923, p. 28.

[32] *Årsbok,* 1927–1928, p. 36.

[33] In these pages the name American Baptist Foreign Mission Society is used in the sense of including also the Woman's Am. Baptist Foreign Mission Society.

INDEPENDENT FOREIGN MISSION WORK

It would be historically incorrect to assume that the General Conference Foreign Missions Advance, which was launched in 1944, came about like a bolt of lightning from the blue. No, indeed! For every event in human history, whether good or bad, has its roots in preparatory factors of the past. As recorded above, the foreign missionary movement among Swedish Baptists got under way in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Before long, glowing reports of the pioneers, such as Johanna Anderson, Ola Hanson, O. L. Swanson, and others, telling of desperate needs and marvelous opportunities in the heathen world, were published in the denominational press. These made a tremendous appeal to an already missionary-minded people. That appeal increased tremendously in strength when, after a few years, the first missionaries returned on furlough to tell appreciative audiences in America of victories won in darkest Asia. It would have been strange, indeed, if being exposed to such wholesome missionary propaganda would not create within the hearts of many Swedish Baptists an intensified interest in missions and a desire to shoulder a greater and more direct responsibility for that glorious project. The God-given instinct of acquisitiveness, "the proprietary instinct" as William James calls it, cooperated with the aroused interest in missions in the direction of an independent foreign missionary movement. Moreover, the General Conference, as representing Swedish Baptists in united action, was gradually growing up and coming of age. What then was more natural than self-expression and a yearning to assume a greater and more independent share in the great work of preaching the gospel to the heathen?

As far as is known, the first public and concrete expression in favor of an independent Swedish Baptist foreign missionary work came as early as 1890 from the pen of the editor of "Nya Wecko-Posten," Eric Wingren. In an editorial he first commended the Baptist Missionary Union, which was the name at that time of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, for its good work. Then the good editor proceeded to give three reasons why Swedish Baptists should have a foreign missions work of their own. The reasons were as follows:

> First, the way it is now, the money we send disappears in the large (American) society, and we lose the personal touch. If we had our own missionaries, we would be stirred to sacrifice and prayer as we felt the responsibility for them. Second, it would have a wholesome reaction on our spiritual life — we would pray more, read the Bible more, and our faith would be increased. Third, the Conference would grow stronger.[34]

[34] *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Jan. 1, 1890; also Jan. 16, 1890, and April 15, 1891.

It is of no small interest to learn that Ola Hanson, at that time a student in Hamilton Theological Seminary and later the brilliant Burma missionary, wrote and endorsed Wingren's proposal. The result would be, according to Hanson, an increase in missionary contributions. He continued, "The Mission Covenant and the Swedish Lutherans have their own foreign missions. Why not the Swedish Baptists?" The method of operation would be to continue cooperation with the American Baptists until that cooperation would gradually cease.[35]

The cause of an independent foreign mission had gained sufficient momentum to be placed on the agenda for discussion in the program of the General Conference. However, at the annual meeting of the Conference held in Rockford, Illinois, September 18–20, 1890, Frank Peterson,[36] pastor of the First Church of Minneapolis, argued very eloquently against a Swedish Baptist Foreign Mission Society. The speaker maintained that the denomination was both inefficient and too limited in resources for such an undertaking.[37] As a result, the Conference was influenced to take no action in the matter.

It would appear that the opponents of a separate Swedish Baptist foreign missionary project succeeded altogether too well in holding the matter in abeyance. However, the interest, though smouldering for a time, was bound to revive. At the annual meeting of the General Conference in Boston, Massachusetts, September 11–15, 1907, the Nebraska delegation, whose constituency in those days was figuratively bursting with new and progressive ideas, proposed two different motions of advance in Swedish Baptist work. The first one was to the effect that the Conference establish a publishing house and a book store of its own. Even though the proposal was voted down, it was a significant trend of the times in favor of denominational independence which made the plan a reality only two years later. The second Nebraska proposition concerned the creation of a Swedish Baptist Foreign Mission Society.[38] That too, was rejected by a cautious Conference. After a few years, however, the matter of an independent foreign mission re-appeared and could no longer be brushed aside.

---

[35] *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Jan. 29, 1890. Some twenty-five years later Hanson very strenuously opposed independent Swedish Baptist foreign missionary work.

[36] Frank Peterson, who in the fall of 1890 began his nearly forty years term of service as district secretary of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, always very consistently opposed an independent Swedish Baptist foreign mission. And it is always possible, although it cannot be proved, that the times were not ripe for such an undertaking in the early years.

[37] *Årsbok,* Svenska Baptistförsamlingarna, 1890–1891, p. 6.

[38] *Årsbok,* Svenska Baptistförsamlingarna, 1907, p. 13.

In the meanwhile, the doughty Baptists of Nebraska continued their missionary agitation. An animated and very wholesome discussion for and against was carried on in "Nya Wecko-Posten" for several months. The Baptists of a generation ago believed in free debate and in a frank and honest exchange of views on important denominational issues. In this they were also encouraged by Editor Eric Wingren, whose influential and well edited paper was always open to all parties for consideration of vital problems, even for friendly polemics carried on in the interest of truth and righteousness. Due to a persistent opposition on the part of some prominent denominational leadership, the Nebraska champions of an independent Swedish Baptist foreign mission project failed to reach that particular goal. However, they were determined not to give up. On June 7, 1909, the brethren in Nebraska met at Valley and organized a foreign mission society of their own.[39] A board was elected with J. A. H. Rosendahl as financial secretary, and appeals for funds were made. After a few months, Victor Renius, who for several years had labored as an independent missionary in China, was taken on and supported by the Nebraska society.

However, it could hardly be expected that a small state conference alone, composed of seventeen churches with a combined membership of 1,153, would be able in the long run to successfully manage an enterprise like foreign missions. It seems a pity that the whole fellowship of Swedish Baptists did not at that time rally to the support of a united foreign missions. Nevertheless, the Nebraska venture served as a preparatory factor to pave the way for greater things to come.

The next step in the direction of independent Swedish Baptist foreign missions was taken in 1914. At that time a young man by the name of G. Theofil Wickman felt the call of God to dedicate himself as a missionary to Spain. After several unsuccessful attempts to be sent by some mission society, Wickman finally, in 1914, launched out on his own, believing that God through His people would supply the necessary means. And in that he was not disappointed. For Editor Wingren became interested in the project and placed at Wickman's disposal his influential weekly "Nya Wecko-Posten," by means of which Swedish Baptists, whose hearts to a large extent were hungry for an independent foreign mission, were given an opportunity to support the mission in Spain. Wingren himself for a few years received and forwarded all the funds to the missionary.[40]

---

[39] *Nya Wecko-Posten,* July 13, 1909. See also June 7, 1909; July 20, 1909; Aug. 3, 1909; Dec. 14, 1909; Dec. 28, 1909; Jan. 4, 1910; Jan. 11, 1910; Jan. 18, 1910; Febr. 15, 1910; March 10, 1910; March 15, 1910.

That the whole denomination had become thoroughly aroused over the question of a self-directed foreign mission is evident from the very spirited and extensive discussion, for and against, in the pages of "Nya Wecko-Posten," and "Svenska Standaret," as well as in the General Conference Annuals. In fact, it was a debate that continued for some seven or eight years, from 1914 to 1922, and the articles that were written, constitute very interesting reading. In the whole history of Swedish Baptist journalism, from 1871 to 1952, probably no other question, save one, has received as extensive a treatment as this one.[41]

After a few years the rather individualistic type of Spanish mission assumed a more concrete and consolidated form. In order to relieve editor Wingren of the responsibility of collecting and transmitting the mission funds, some interested brethren in Chicago formed, in 1917, an independent foreign mission committee, later known as the Swedish Baptist Foreign Mission Society.[42] The society took over Wickman and the Spanish mission as its first project. Two years later, May 16, 1919, E. W. Olson was sent as missionary to Siberia. That became the starting point of the Russian mission.[43] Since the Chicago mission society had not as yet been formally adopted as a child of the General Conference, but was, in fact, persistently opposed by certain prominent denominational leaders, it had some years of rather rough sailing. Encouraging, however, was the fact that a great many from the rank and file of Swedish Baptists continued to support with their means the Spanish and the Russian missions. In 1922 the Spanish Mission, which had prospered through conversions and churches organized, was turned over to the Southern Baptist Convention. In 1922, two other missionaries sailed for Siberia, namely, August Lindstedt and Miss Margaret Bergskold. The two were married in Vladivostok, Siberia, the following year.[44]

---

[40] *Nya Wecko-Posten,* February 9, 1915, p. 6.

[41] Only a few of the references could be given here: *Årsbok,* Svenska Baptistförsamlingarna, 1915–1916, p. 42; 1919–1920, pp. 73–75; 1920–1921, p. 93; 1921–1922, p. 22; 1922–1923, p. 24. *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Oct. 3, 1916; Oct. 31, 1916; Nov. 7, 1916; Febr. 27, 1917; March 2, 1917; March 27, 1917; — *Svenska Standaret,* Jan. 25, 1917; Febr. 15, 1917; March 1, 1917; March 8, 1917; March 22, 1917; March 29, 1917; April 5, 1917; April 26, 1917; May 10, 1917; Jan. 14, 1919; May 13, 1919; August 26, 1919; Sept. 9, 1919; Jan. 27, 1920; Jan. 4, 1921; Jan. 30, 1923; July 10, 1923.

[42] *Svenska Standaret,* Jan. 25, 1917.

[43] *Svenska Standaret,* May 13, 1919.

[44] *Annual,* Baptist General Conference, 1950–1951, p. 131.

As time advanced, the feeling in the denomination became more and more pronounced that the independent mission society in Chicago should have a closer fellowship with the General Conference and become an organic part of that organization. The first definite step in that direction came in the form of a recommendation from the first survey commission, "The Committee of Twenty-one," to the annual meeting of the General Conference, held at Worcester, Massachusetts, August 24–29, 1920.[45] The recommendation was to the effect that the General Conference appoint a committee to carry on foreign missionary work, and negotiate with the Chicago society relative to taking over of its work. Undoubtedly that was the most important and far reaching proposition suggested by "The Committee of Twenty-one." It required a few more years before that recommendation could be fully realized. Finally the time came and the transaction was consummated April 15, 1923.[46] In the light of later developments, even though for the time being it might have appeared insignificant, that decision turned out to be one of the more important ones in the history of the Swedish Baptists. For it meant that the General Conference had actually begun foreign missionary work of its own, which was part of the task provided for in the original constitution adopted in 1880. That task was a fourfold one, developed in the following order: home missions, literature or publications, educational work, and foreign missions. For several years, however, foreign missions, commonly known as the Russian Mission, did not function as a distinct department but was operated by the board of missions under the mission secretary.

The Lindstedts carried on faithfully first in Siberia, and, after being forced out by the Communists, for several years in Manchuria. When the Communists took over Manchuria, Lindstedts established a mission among refugee Russians in China, which they continued until 1946.

The missionary fire kept on burning with increasing strength in the churches. The next step in the forward march came in 1932. By that time the Swedish Baptist young people had caught the missionary vision and pledged themselves to support, through the Young People's Commission, Mr. and Mrs. Reuben Holm, who in the fall of that year, 1932, took up missionary work on the North Bank of Assam, India. Later they were transferred to the Golaghat field to become fellow-laborers with O. L. Swanson. A budget of $4,500 was required the first year, but the young people responded enthusiastically, raising almost $5,000 the first year. It should be borne in mind, however, that this project was not, strictly speaking, an independent Swedish Baptist foreign mission for the Holms served under the auspices of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society. Nevertheless, it became a creative factor in the development of the cause of missions in the whole denomination. The meaning of that movement to the churches at home is well stated in the report of the Young People's Commission to the General Conference, meeting in Austin, Chicago, June 14–18, 1933:

---

[45] *Årsbok,* 1919–1920, pp. 73–74.

[46] *Årsbok,* 1922–1923, p. 24. See also *Årsbok,* 1920–1921, p. 93; 1921–1922, p. 22; and *Svenska Standaret,* Jan. 30, 1923, July 10, 1923.

> So hearty has been the interest in the sailing of the Holms to Assam that we feel that the adoption of this common denominational cause by our people throughout the country has done more to create a spirit of oneness and to strengthen the denominational consciousness than anything else could have done.[47]

Another door was opened to Swedish Baptists a few years later. In the movement of retreat and retrenchment which the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society had experienced for a decade or more, the Society found itself unable any longer to support one of its older fields in Assam, namely the Manipur Mission. An appeal was made to the Mission committee of the General Conference, and very wisely this committee laid the matter before the churches directly, giving them an opportunity to decide whether to move forward or not. Their response was decisive. In three months $4,200 was pledged, and the committee went before the Conference at Cambridge, Minnesota in June 1939, with the recommendation to take over the support of the Ahlquists at Manipur at a budget of $4,500. That recommendation was enthusiastically adopted, and the churches went over the top in the gathering of funds, raising $5,221.90 during the first year.[48] Undoubtedly the wholehearted response, in a large measure, came as an expression of loving confidence in the heroic missionaries, Dr. Ahlquist, "the beloved physician," and his good wife, who with great sacrifice were willing to go to this new field.

After less than two years, on March 12, 1941, the beloved missionary-doctor, warm-hearted friend and great lover of souls, met, as it would seem, with an untimely death, being killed in a motor accident.[49] Another missionary, Earl Brock, was then supported by the General Conference in the Manipur field a few years. However, the invasion of the Japanese into that part of Assam during World War II made his permanent stay there impossible. In the meanwhile, the General Conference in the early nineteen-forties enlarged its missionary obligations by assuming the partial support of the Herman Tegenfeldts in Burma, the Franklin Nelsons, also in Burma, and an "over and above" contribution to Bengt Anderson's flourishing work among the Sema Nagas of Assam.[50] In God's providence the time had now arrived for the General Conference to adopt a greatly expanded foreign missionary program.

---

[47] *Annual,* Swedish Baptist Churches of America, 1933–1934, Part I, p. 63.

[48] *Annual,* 1940–1941, p. 47.

[49] *Ebenezer,* An Illustrated Annual of the Swedish Baptist General Conference, 1942, p. 93.

FOREIGN MISSION ADVANCE

In the preceding pages there has been traced the slow but sure development of an autonomous General Conference Foreign Missionary program. Editor Wingren's agitation in the early eighteen-nineties in favor of an independent Swedish Baptist foreign mission; the Nebraska foreign mission society in 1909; the Spanish mission under Wickman begun in 1914; the Chicago Swedish Baptist Foreign Mission Society organized in 1917; the Russian mission begun in 1919; the General Conference assuming operating control of the Chicago society in 1923; the young people of the Conference undertaking in 1932 the support of the Reuben Holms in Assam; the Conference becoming responsible for the maintenance of the Ahlquists in the Manipur State of Assam in 1939; and a few years later the Herman Tegenfeldts in Burma, the Franklin Nelsons in Burma, and part support of Bengt Anderson in Assam — all these and many more were factors preparing the way for the momentous decision of 1944 to advance in foreign missions. It should be borne in mind, however, that what happened in 1944 constituted an "advance" and not the beginning of Swedish Baptist foreign missionary work. As far as the local churches are concerned, the origin of foreign missions can be traced to the Rock Island church, organized in 1852. And, within the framework of the General Conference as such, the real starting point was April 15, 1923, when the Conference took over the work of the Chicago Foreign Mission Society. Among the preparatory factors, also, it is undoubtedly historically correct to refer to the Missions department of the Seminary whose silent but potent influence in favor of an autonomous foreign missions program can hardly be overestimated.

In the early part of 1944 the stage was being set to advance. The editor of the Standard received a request that a place be provided for an open forum within the pages of that paper on the question of missions, both present and future.[51] From the many contributions that were sent in, it was evident that the Conference Baptists had become thoroughly aroused over the problem of foreign missions.[52] Two main reasons were advanced in favor of an independent foreign mission project. In the first place, the churches and the Conference had for several years been greatly disturbed and much grieved over the practice by the Board of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society of the so-called "Evangelical Policy" inclusively interpreted and applied.[53] The Conference Baptist people wanted to be sure they were supporting only missionaries who were true to the Word of God, and who were under the direction of a Board that was faithful to the Bible. Second, since it had pleased God to bless and prosper in a marvelous way the work of the churches on the home field, including direct home missions, literary and publication endeavors, and educational missions, and since the Lord had kept the churches together as a Conference fellowship, thereby clearly indicating that there was continued work to do for the General Conference, there was no other logical conclusion than that the Lord of the harvest meant that his people should advance with the gospel even to the uttermost parts of the earth.[54] In short, the Conference Baptist people were convinced that greater achievements and victories for the kingdom of God would result from a foreign missionary work of their own than could ever be the case while depending upon a larger organization. The brief history of the Foreign Mission Advance very definitely proves that supposition.

---

[50] *Annual,* Swedish Baptist Churches of America, 1941–1942, pp. 45–46; *Annual,* 1943–1944, pp. 18–20; 1944–1945, pp. 43–44; 1945–1946, pp. 48–50.

At the annual meeting of the General Conference, held at Bethel College and Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota, June 21–25, 1944, it was voted with great enthusiasm to launch a Conference owned and operated foreign mission advance, including the following plan: 1) To create a foreign mission board on par with the other boards of the Conference. 2) To formulate a statement of foreign mission policy. 3) To develop preliminary plans for the new foreign mission department. 4) That no further commitments by the General Conference as such be made to any foreign mission organization. 5) To start a campaign for the purpose of raising $50,000 for the support of this new work. 6) That the educational standards for missionary candidates be college and seminary training or its equivalent, and that candidates must qualify as to their personal faith in the fundamental doctrines of historic Baptist faith. 7) That the Conference elect Walfred Danielson to the office of Foreign Mission Secretary.[55]

---

[51] Arthur Ittermann, *Missionary Administration of the Swedish Baptist General Conference of America,* 1950, p. 65.

[52] See articles in *The Standard* in the early months of 1944.

[53] *Annual,* Swedish Baptists Churches of America, 1944–1945, p. 28.

[54] *Foreign Mission,* September, 1950, p. 1.

A temporary foreign mission board was elected to serve until a regular board could be elected in 1945. Secretary Danielson became a godsend for "such a time"; for under his wise leadership the Foreign Mission Advance achieved immediate victories. By natural endowment as well as by a thorough training and a rich experience as educator at Bethel, missionary in Assam, and associate secretary of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, he was peculiarly well qualified for his responsible position. In March of the following year, 1945, the first "Advance" flag was planted on foreign soil when Sten Lindberg entered China. He, too, like Danielson, became God's special gift to Conference Baptists at that important juncture of their history. Born in China of missionary parents sent out by the Baptists of Sweden, he proved to be the right man to start Conference Baptist missions among the millions of China.

When "The Foreign Mission Advance" was launched in 1944, the Lindstedts, working among Russians in China, were the only Conference administered foreign missionaries. With them were included three commitments under the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, namely, Rev. and Mrs. Reuben Holm, Assam; Rev. and Mrs. Herman Tegenfeldt of the Kachin Country, Burma; and Rev. and Mrs. Franklin O. Nelson, ministering to the Chin hill tribe in Burma. It was decided to retain these commitments and thus continue the cooperation with the mother Society. At the annual meeting of the General Conference in Duluth, Minnesota, June 27–July 1, 1945, the secretary of "The Advance" was able to give the following encouraging report:

> A year ago the Conference announced the hope that an additional fund of $50,000 might be raised by Easter 1945. On that date more than $60,000 had been gathered in. Today the total has mounted to $80,000 plus.
>
> The Committee on Missions recommended a foreign missions budget for the year 1945–1946 of the amount of $102,939, including the present commitments, the Advance, and the Russian mission. Of this total, $80,000 is already in hand.
>
> A forecast of the next six years' development suggests the building up of the missionary staff each year by three missionary families, and one or more single workers. Accordingly, by the beginning of the sixth year (1952) the Conference should have on the field 25 family and single units or a total of 52 missionaries, at an annual outlay of less than $200,000, with a reserve fund in hand of $75,000 to $100,000.

---

[55] *Annual,* 1944–1945, pp. 28–29.

> This will require a walk of faith, faith not in organization and funds, but a reliance upon Almighty God whose Spirit has touched our hearts and who has sent forth workers to the ends of the earth to proclaim His message of redeeming grace. This faith is already in operation. How otherwise can we interpret the overwhelming response from our churches in the form of sacrifice and the supplying of means even before the Conference could ratify the detailed plans.[56]

The organizational framework through which the Conference was to carry out its Advance program abroad was defined in the new constitution adopted at the Duluth meeting the same year, which, among other things, provided for a regular Board of Foreign Missions to be coordinated with the other Conference Boards.[57] Another encouraging report cheered the hearts of the delegates assembled at the Duluth Conference. Through negotiations with the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, provisions had been made for "the assignment of the North Bank of Assam to the Conference for its independent missionary administration with comity recognized."[58]

However, more encouraging than organization and funds and fields was the fact that a host of Conference young people stood ready to offer themselves on the altar of foreign missions. "The King's business requires haste." In February of 1946, Reverend and Mrs. K. William Hagstrom and Reverend and Mrs. J. Warren Johnson sailed for Assam as the vanguard of the North Bank Mission. God led into both Japan and the Philippines in 1948–1949; Ethiopia, the most recent Conference Baptist field, was entered in 1949–1950.

> The first year of the "Advance" saw six newly appointed missionaries. Seven were appointed the next year, and six more in 1946–1947. A record of ten marked 1947–1948, among the appointees being two former commitments under the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society. Eight additional young people were accepted the following year; and fourteen in 1949–1950. Thus, two full years ahead of time, the goal of "52 missionaries by 1952" had been reached.[59]

Moreover, a rich flow of increased giving has manifested the joy of God's people in the new work. The special goal of $50,000 the first year was overshot by fifty percent to $75,272.50, and other giving brought the total to $112,337.78. Succeeding years showed a steady advance, reaching a high of $169,397.99 in 1949–1950.[60]

[56] *Annual,* 1945–1946, p. 51.
[57] See Ch. Twenty-one.
[58] *Annual,* 1945–1946, p. 54.
[59] *Foreign Mission Summary,* Sept. 1950, p. 1.
[60] Ibid., p. 1.

The missionaries are located as follows:

Assam: Mr. and Mrs. J. Warren Johnson, Miss Arlene Jensen, Mr. and Mrs. K. William Hagstrom, Miss Grace Swanson, Miss Arlene Peterson, Dr. (M.D.) and Mrs. Charles Merchant, Mr. and Mrs. Dana Larson, Mr. and Mrs. Wilbur Sorley, Mr. and Mrs. Reuben Holm, Mr. and Mrs. (M.D.) Paul Edwards, Mr. and Mrs. George Johnson, Mr. and Mrs. William Murray, Miss Betty Person, and Miss Helen Bergfalk.

China: Mr. and Mrs. Dale Bjork, Miss Esther Nelson (evacuated).

Ethiopia: Mr. and Mrs. David Sperry, Mrs. Ralph Larson (her husband, Ralph Larson, was murdered by an Ethiopian bandit Nov. 13, 1951, and Mrs. Larson returned to the homeland), Mr. and Mrs. James Luckman, Dr. (M.D.) and Mrs. David Ruppert, Mr. and Mrs. Maynard Johnson, and Mr. and Mrs. Donald Calhoun.

Japan: Mr. and Mrs. Francis Sorley, Miss Leona Larm, Miss Elsie Funk, Mr. and Mrs. Harris Youngquist, Mr. and Mrs. Sten Lindberg (formerly in China), Mr. and Mrs. Glen Swanson, Miss Elaine Nordstrom.

Philippine Islands: Miss Agnes Erickson, Mr. and Mrs. Irwin Bjelland, Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Nelson, and Miss B-Etta Mayer.

Burma: Mr. and Mrs. Franklin Nelson, and Mr. and Mrs. Herman Tegenfeldt.

Appointed and awaiting sailing: Mr. and Mrs. Scott A. Kerr, Miss Dorette Haglund, Mr. and Mrs. Ferris Hough, Dr. Norman B. Copeland, and Miss Arleth Brask.

A hospital is under construction in Assam, centrally located to serve that needy field. Several of the young women have nurses' training. And several of the other missionaries combine teaching with direct evangelism in their efforts to win the lost for Christ.

The history of the Foreign Mission Advance, some six or seven years, is too brief for us to begin to tabulate results, excepting what has already been recorded in regard to missionaries sent forth and contributions received. Heaven alone has a record of the souls that have been saved in these years of beginning. However, it is safe to say that "the Advance" has made a profound impression upon the churches at home. As a unifying and spiritually strengthening power, creating a wholesome denominational consciousness, its true value cannot be overestimated. Something similar was experienced thirty years earlier, in 1914, when the General Conference assumed full responsibility for its school work and began what is now known as Bethel College and Seminary.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

YOUTH ACTIVITIES

1. SUNDAY SCHOOLS

The Sunday school has played an important role in the development of the local churches of the Conference. It can be safely stated that the histories of the church and the Sunday school have been practically coextensive.

The date of 1791 has been given as the point of beginning of the permanent Sunday school work in America; but at this early date, the instruction was largely secular and was given by paid teachers. "It is believed that the first Sunday school for exclusively religious instruction was organized by the Second Baptist Church of Baltimore in 1804."[1] Baptists have been among the foremost in recognizing the importance of religious education. By 1850, therefore, the Sunday school movement had grown with the westward advance so that in many instances these schools became the seeds of the local churches. John Mason Peck, the great Baptist missionary of the middle west, spent much of his time and energy during the first half of the nineteenth century establishing Sunday schools. The American Sunday School Union also sent missionaries to the west during this period.[2]

The Sunday School is not a new invention, for it can be directly traced back to the Bible school connected with the synagogues.

> The regular synagogue service itself was almost an exact prototype of the early Sunday school. The service consisted of the public recitation of passages calling on the people to remember the law and the words of Jehovah, the reading of parts of the prophets, the offering of prayer, and the giving of a formal benediction. The Scriptures were read in the ancient tongue, and translation into the popular dialect given, followed by a popular exposition.[3]

---

[1] Vedder, Henry C. *A History of Baptists in the Middle States* (Philadelphia, 1898), p. 256.

[2] Muncy Jr., W. L. *A History of Evangelism in the United States.* (Kansas City; Central Seminary Press, 1945) p. 109.

[3] Wiles, Charles P. *The Challenge of the Sunday School,* Philadelphia, (1916) p. 12.

Both Philo and Josephus tesitfy to the existence of a complete religious school system in Palestine in the days of our Lord.[4] Education has always been linked arm in arm with evangelism. "Make disciples of all nations . . . teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you," were the closing commissioning remarks of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If a local church desires to grow, it must have a growing Sunday school. Even a casual study of the statistical annuals of the Baptist General Conference will reveal that the churches which have grown numerically have been, with but few exceptions, churches that have had Sunday schools with an enrollment record greater than the membership listing of the church. In many of these cases the Sunday school enrollment has exceeded the church membership by fifteen to twenty per cent. In 1949 a statement was made at a large national Sunday school convention, that 75% of the church members come from the Sunday school. (This may be a conservative estimate, for others testify that as many as 85% come from the Sunday school). Further, the statement declared, 98% of all of the pastors and missionaries come out of a Sunday school background.

Nearly every church maintained a Sunday school of some kind from the very beginning of its history. This work of instructing the children as well as the adults, was felt to be so important that in several of the district conferences steps were taken to unify the work of the local Sunday schools in order to encourage, extend and intensify them.

Sunday School Unions

One of the first district unions was in Kansas, organized in Topeka, February, 1888. For a few years the society met semi-annually for meetings of inspiration and instruction, until 1892 when C. A. Sandvall was called to be a Sunday school missionary. He served for a few months and was followed in quick succession by several men until E. W. Olson was called in 1905 from Minnesota to be a Sunday school missionary and Bible colporteur on the Kansas and Nebraska fields. The first eleven years he drove Bible wagon No. 38, drawn by mules or horses, thousands of miles over all types of primitive roads in Kansas and Nebraska. Later he traveled in the famous model "T" Ford, Car. No. 18, driving it well over 100,000 miles. The American Baptist Publication Society provided part of the support for Olson in the early part of his ministry. In 1912 Olson confined his services to the state of Nebraska while Rev. L. M. Backlund ministered to the

---

[4] Ibid., p. 13.

Kansas constituency. In 1921 Olson returned to Kansas to continue his travels from Sunday school to Sunday school over the Kansas prairies.[5] The Nebraska Sunday School Union dissolved in 1916 when it was decided to unite all of the conference organizations under a new constitution.[6]

The Sunday School Union in Illinois was organized in Chicago, October, 1892, under the leadership of Eric Sandell. A three-fold purpose was outlined as follows: work up interest in new work, help pastors and churches in evangelistic work, try to set up institutes for teacher training. G. A. Hagstrom was the first missionary engaged, beginning his ministry in the spring of 1893. In January of 1897 E. J. Nordlander succeeded Hagstrom and was followed in June, 1901 by Rev. Charles Palm, who spent sixteen fruitful years in that service. The American Baptist Publication Society assisted in Illinois, too, by paying for half of the operating cost of a Bible wagon called the "Palmquist Memorial". At the twentieth anniversary of the Illinois Sunday School Union, G. E. Wallendorf stated that there were 20 Sunday schools with 493 teachers, 5,321 pupils. There were ten men's classes with 292 members and five women's classes with 162 members, nineteen combined men and women's classes with 413 members. During the first twelve years of the twentieth century there was an average increase of 152 members per year.[7] By way of comparison, in a recent Conference Annual there are listed 31 Sunday schools with a total of 6,985 pupils.[8] In later years the activities of the Sunday School Union have been merged with the Illinois Conference.[9]

In the New York Conference there was no formal Sunday School Union until 1912. Before this time, this important work was carried on by the indefatigable worker, P. E. Engberg. In 1893 Engberg was appointed missionary for the Sunday schools. At the Conference in Meriden, Connecticut, 1914, Engberg reported that he had organized 116 Sunday schools, which in turn had developed into thirty churches. All of the children called him "Uncle Engberg", and he called them "My little comrades."[10]

---

[5] Lovene, P. *History of the Swedish Baptist Churches of Kansas and Missouri, 1869–1927*. pp. 75–79.

[6] Seaquist, Carl J. *Conference Churches by the Oregon Trail* (1872–1947) p. 15.

[7] Wallendorf, G. E. "Twentieth Anniversary of Sunday School Union in Illinois." *Svenska Standaret,* Oct. 25, 1912.

[8] *Annual,* Baptist General Conference, 1949–1950, p. 145.

[9] Backlund, J. O. *Swedish Baptist in America,* (1933) p. 144.

[10] Klingberg, J. E. *A Brief History of the Swedish Baptist, New York Conference, 1883–1933.* pp. 14, 20.

Engberg labored also in the New England Conference in connection with his work in the New York Conference until 1904, when he gave himself entirely to the latter group. In 1907 the Swedish Baptist Sunday School Union of New England was organized at Quincy, Massachusetts, and in 1914 incorporated as the New England Swedish Baptist Sunday School Union and Bethel Beach Assembly. "This colony grew fast and attracted a great number of people, especially to the assemblies, but as the city crowded closer it lost in popularity and discontinued its annual assemblies. In 1925 the Bethel Beach property was transferred to the New England Conference, and the Sunday School Union was disbanded."[11] Although spasmodic attempts to revive the former union were made throughout the years, it was not until 1945 that the present Sunday School Institute was formed. The aim of this organization is described as follows: "To recapture Sunday school interest, enrollment, and attendance; and thus surround our children with the Christian instruction needed for their spiritual development."[12]

Sunday school promotion in Minnesota carried on by the state conference through the appointment of various missionaries. The earliest Sunday School Union, though not state-wide, was organized in February, 1892. C. E. Westin was called to be the Sunday school missionary in the area in and around Isanti County. The American Baptist Publication Society in 1903 supplied Westin with a Bible wagon called "John Anderson's Minne." Westin continued this ministry until 1914.[13] The various state missionaries contributed to the promotion of Sunday school work; notable among those was Magnus Berglund who served for nearly two decades. However, in 1919 G. E. Wallendorf was called to do missionary work particularly among the Sunday schools and the young people's societies. E. A. Fernlund succeeded him in 1927 and served in the same capacity for a few years. It was not until the annual conference, September, 1940, that a Sunday School Commission was appointed.[14] This Commission has continued to function in promotion of Sunday school work throughout the entire state.

Nearly every district conference during the last two decades has formed some type of Sunday school organization. The most active promotion, however, has been through designated organizations of the

---

[11] Backlund, op. cit., p. 144.

[12] Ogrean, William. *History of the Swedish Baptist Conference of New England.* (1949). p. 3.

[13] Ryden, P. *Svenska Baptisternas i Minnesota Historia, 1850–1918.* pp. 266–267.

[14] *Annual,* of the Swedish Baptist Conference of Minnesota, 1939-1940. p. 19.

General Conference. The first group that did any active Sunday school planning to meet the opportunities as well as the problems was the Young People's Commission, elected by the Conference at its annual session in 1926. Primary attention was given to the young people's work, yet consideration was directed to the promotion of teachers' training institutes and the need for graded Sunday school literature, particularly material that would give a strong Baptist emphasis.

At the annual meeting of the Conference in 1934, the Young People's Commission was enlarged in its membership and delegated to give special study to the Sunday school needs of our conference. The Commission was now called the "Bible School and Young People's Commission."[15] Up to this time the work of the Commission was the responsibility of the officers.

From the very inception of this new commission, it was felt that little could be accomplished until a full time Sunday school and young people's director could be appointed to carry out the mandates of this program. In 1936, Sidney B. Nelson was called to a combined position, namely that of editor of "The Baptist Evangel" and director of the Bible school and young people's work of the Conference, in which capacity he served until 1941.[16]

In 1941 the Bible school and young people's work was delegated to two separate commissions composed of six members each. This policy continued until the General Conference revised its constitution in 1945 and unified the two agencies by creating a "Board of Young People's and Bible School Work" with ten members.

Undoubtedly, the most significant strides in Sunday School work, from a Conference point of view, were taken during the time that William Tapper served as director of the Bible school and young people's work of the Conference. Tapper began his ministry in 1943 and continued until 1949, when he was succeeded by J. Leonard Carroll, who served for only one year. The present director of Sunday school work is Leonard Webster. During this period of directed activity, the enrollment of our Conference Sunday Schools increased from 34,989 in 1943 to 53,953 in 1951. During this same period there was a total number of 1,700 Vacation Bible Schools throughout the Conference fellowship, with an enrollment of more than 100,000 pupils and more than 12,000 teachers. Over $10,000 was given by the children in these Bible schools for Conference missionary projects.[17]

---

[15] *Annual,* Swedish Baptist Churches of America, 1934–'35, I. p. 124.
[16] Ibid., 1936–'37, p. 25.
[17] *Annual,* Swedish Baptist Churches of America, 1949–'50, 1950–'51, 1951–'52.

2. YOUNG PEOPLE'S ACTIVITIES

The young people's society in the local church has been regarded as the prospective church in action. The Baptist Young People's Union (B.Y.P.U.) provided fellowship, instruction in Christian discipleship as well as leadership training. In the early years the young people's society was the meeting place for many of the immigrant youth. Here the lonesome reflections of the fatherland melted away amid the singing of gospel hymns, the thrill of enthusiastic worship, the joyous companionship of kindred lives, and the challenge to spiritual cooperation in order to accomplish the mission of the Lord Jesus Christ. The immigration situation has altered considerably the last quarter of the century, yet the opportunity to meet the needs of young people are still imperative.

The modern young people's movement did not begin among the Baptists until July, 1891. Due to the efforts of Benjamin Griffith and the American Baptist Publication Society, of which Griffith was general secretary, the Baptist Young People's Union of America was organized in Chicago.[18] A similar union for young people among the Swedish Baptist churches was envisioned by O. L. Swanson, and he was ably supported by Carl E. Oberg, Charles Palm and G. A. Hagstrom.[19] The result of this combined enthusiasm was an organizational meeting of the Illinois Young People's Union in Rockford, Illinois, June 24, 1893.[20] In October of the same year, a constitution was adopted, and officers of the parent young people's union among the Swedish Baptists were elected as follows: Carl Oberg, president; Charles Palm, vice-president; Carl O. Dahlen, secretary; Frank Johnson, treasurer. The purpose of this first union was "to bring about a closer cooperation between the Swedish young people's societies in Illinois, to foster spiritual fervor and power, to awaken more zeal for Christian service, to awaken interest in Bible study, Baptist beliefs and history, and to encourage a more active participation in the missionary labors of the denomination."[21]

A reorganization of the Illinois Union took place April 20, 1917, when the Chicago Ungdomsförbund (Young People's Alliance) was formed.[22] This organization still exists, although the name has been changed and its program restyled for the new day. The union in Western Illinois organized in Kewanee in 1919, included Galesburg, Princeton, Monmouth, and Kewanee. The following year the societies of Moline, Davenport, and Burlington joined the Union, and the name was changed to "The Baptist Young People's Union of Western Illinois and Eastern Iowa."[23] When the Iowa B.Y.P.U. reorganized to include Davenport and Burlington, the last three words of the official title were dropped, so that the union then became exclusively Western Illinois.[24]

---

[18] Torbet, Robert G. *A History of the Baptists.* (Judson Press, 1950). p. 462.

[19] Wallendorf, G. E. "Our Young People's Work", *Svenska Standaret,* August 23, 1927, p. 3.

[20] Backlund, op. cit., p. 148.

[21] Backlund, op. cit., p. 149.

[22] *Svenska Standaret,* April 26, 1917, p. 5.

Minnesota was the next conference to organize a young people's union. Under the leading of J. P. Rosquist, Sunday School missionary in the employ of the American Baptist Publication Society, the Union came into being in September, 1894, at the First Baptist Church, St. Paul. The first officers were Olof Bodien, president; M. Larson, vice-president; L. J. Olson, secretary; Lottie Anderson, treasurer.[25] In 1907 this Union was reorganized and officially named "The Swedish Baptist in Minnesota Young People's Union."[26] The Minnesota B.Y.P.U. has had an active program down throughout the years with well attended annual meetings. Missionary work in the state has been promoted by supporting student missionaries. In 1910 the support of two student missionaries for the summer was undertaken, and this program has been carried on throughout the years. The young people also had the privilege of supporting A. D. Grant who went to the sparsely settled communities in northern Minnesota and ministered in a sacrificial way as a real pioneer missionary. Grant traversed these northern Minnesota communities from 1910 to 1932. At first the Union paid a part of his salary, but in 1919 it undertook to pay his entire salary.[27] Grant was also assisted by the Union in the purchase of automobiles on at least two occasions.

Beside the state Union in Minnesota, several district Unions have been organized: Twin City, Duluth-Superior, Red River Valley, East Central, Northwestern, North Central, The Range, Southeastern, Southern, West Central, and Cross Lake District.[28]

The Young People's Union in the New York Conference was organized in 1895 in connection with the annual meetings of the Conference. The young people were permitted to arrange their own program and to meet on Saturday afternoon of the Conference week.[29]

---

[23] Backlund, op. cit., p. 148.
[24] Ibid., p. 148.
[25] *Nya Wecko-Posten,* December 12, 1894.
[26] Ibid., August 20, 1907.
[27] *Svenska Standaret,* December 9, 1919.
[28] Backlund, op. cit., p. 153.
[29] Ibid., p. 150.

In 1904 this Union was reorganized at a meeting held in Bridgeport, Connecticut. For many years this Union has supported Rev. and Mrs. Erhardt Swenson, missionaries in Argentine, South America.

Next, make a quick trip across the nation in 1901 to California, to an organizational meeting of the Young People's Union. Miss Lina Hagstrom was the motivating influence. As a missionary in the church at Oakland, she took special interest in the young people and succeeded, in the early summer of 1900, in arranging for combined meetings with the churches in the bay area. The next year, April 14, a young people's organization began with J. T. Norrby as president. The Kingsburg and Los Angeles societies did not join the Union until several years later. "The purpose of the Union has been twofold: to cooperate in missionary activities and to gather periodically for mutual fellowship and inspiration."[30]

C. E. Oberg, who was then missionary in Iowa, was the inspiration behind the Young People's Union in that state. At a well attended and enthusiastic meeting in Des Moines, October, 1903, the new Union was born. The first president was A. M. Burgason. After a few years the Union disintegrated, but three decades later, in April, 1932, in the city of the first organization under the leadership of A. E. Appelquist, the Union was revived and has continued to function until the present day.[31]

The New England Young People in 1902 organized into a union called the "Ungdomsförbund"[32] (Young People's Alliance). Reports are scarce regarding the early days of this Union, although the Conference records oftentimes would commend the Union for its fine work. In 1926, a committee was formed to revitalize this Union, and finally in September, 1931, the Union was reorganized as the Baptist Young People's Union of New England. This Union, like most of the unions during the decade of the thirties, supported the Conference young people's missionary program by contributing to the support of Rev. and Mrs. Reuben Holm, missionaries in Assam, India. The purpose of the Union is described as follows: "To encourage and secure a closer fellowship and increased spirituality among the young people, their education in Scriptural knowledge, their instruction in Baptist history and doctrine, and their enlistment in missionary activities."[33]

The Columbia Conference Young People's Union was started under the leadership of Gustaf Nyquist and Axel Lindgren. The organizational meeting was held at Everett, Washington, February, 1904, and included representatives of the Western Washington churches.[34] In 1930 the Union was enlarged to include Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Western Montana. In 1934 the first Bible Camp was held at Covenant Beach, Des Moines, Washington.[35]

---

[30] Backlund, op. cit., p. 153.

[31] Ibid., p. 150.

[32] Ogrean. Op. Cit., p. 3.

[33] *Årsbok,* Svenska Baptisternas i New England Konferens, 1932, p. 28.

The churches in Kansas and Missouri formed a Union in 1905 called "The South Western Young People's Covenant."[36] The following year, 1906, the "Union of the Swedish Baptist Young People of Nebraska" was started. Gustaf Nyquist of Omaha was the first chairman. For several years meetings were held in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Conference, but in 1916 the Union disbanded, and the Conference assumed the responsibilities for the young people's work until 1934 when the Union was revived with the ambitious title, "The Platte Valley Baptist Young People's Evangelistic League." M. B. Fritzell was the first chairman of the new group. The major activity of the group has been the promotion of the Bible Camp program each summer.

Fourteen delegates represented the young people's societies of the Upper Michigan churches on July 15, 1916 at Norway, Michigan, when the union of Upper Michigan was formed. P. E. Sorbom, C. A. Carlson and J. Linder were all enthusiatic supporters of this program. Linder was the first president of the Union. Like most of the unions in the early days, the meetings were all conducted in the Swedish language. Swedish predominated in Upper Michigan until the early twenties.

After the Upper Michigan young people had organized, the Lower Michigan young people were quick to follow suit, for in the following year, June 15, 1917, at Algoma, the Lower Michigan Young People's Union came into being. In recent years this organization has been very active in a strong summer camp program.

The Wisconsin Ungdomsförbund (Wisconsin Swedish Baptist Alliance) started with ten societies represented at the organization in Mason, Wisconsin, June 28, 1919. The purpose of the organization was to bring about a closer communion of the Swedish Baptist young people in the state of Wisconsin, to promote spiritual growth of the young people, to stimulate interest in mission work, and to promote intellectual development. The annual meetings have usually been held in conjunction with the Wisconsin State Conference. Markus Paudot, a

[34] Lindgren, Axel. "Ungdomsförbundets Historia," *Svenska Baptisternas Historia: Washington och Norra Idaho.* pp. 127–130.

[35] Booklet: *Columbia Conference* (Golden Jubilee publication, 1889–1939) p. 35.

[36] Lovene, op. cit., p. 80.

native worker with O. L. Swanson in Assam, India, was supported, and several home mission projects were undertaken. One of the great projects of the Wisconsin Union has been the promotion and building of the beautiful summer assembly grounds at Wood Lake.

The Middle East Conference Young People's Union dates its organization from September, 1922. Seven churches were present at the first meeting in Warren, Pennsylvania. Its purpose was to promote deeper spirituality among and closer cooperation between the local young people's organizations. For several years it contributed liberally toward the support of a Conference missionary.[37]

The Canadian conferences maintain active youth organizations. The Alberta Union was born in 1923 during the time of the Swedish Baptist Conference annual meeting of that district at the Nashville church, near Wetaskiwin. Early in the Union's history the value of the printed word was realized, and a monthly periodical went to the various societies to keep them informed and encouraged in the Christian faith. The Union also supported the Bible Institute which came into being in 1924.[38]

The Union of the Central Conference was formed as recently as 1931. "The Gospel Echo" was the name of the official organ of the Union which served as a connecting medium between the various societies.[39] It should be stated that many of the district young people's unions have maintained publications throughout the years.

Assemblies and Camps

One of the phenomenal developments in youth programming the last quarter of the Conference century is the summer camp program. The Y.M.C.A., Boy Scouts and other similar groups had pioneered in this type of youth training and recreation with great success. The various church groups soon picked up the idea with enthusiasm. The young people's unions of the district conferences outlined a Bible-centered curriculum with a lively recreational program and directed activities in Christian fellowship. There is probably no other cooperative program among the youth societies that has brought such rich returns.

The earliest endeavor in a summer camp program was promoted by the Sunday School Union of the New England Baptist Churches. The year following the Sunday School Union's organization in 1907, a summer colony and assembly grounds was built at Bethel Beach, outside of Quincy, Massachusetts. Great crowds attended the assemblies, but soon the city began to press in, and popularity began to wane until the summer assembly programs were discontinued. In 1942 the New England Conference bought property for a camp site on Lake Tispaquin, near Middleboro, Massachusetts. A handsome chapel, dining hall and several cabins now cover the grounds. A full program is being carried on each summer.[40]

---

[37] Backlund, op. cit., p. 151.
[38] Ibid., p. 154.
[39] Ibid., p. 154.

The Illinois Summer Assembly has the distinction of having conducted a Bible camp program for the longest continuous period.

It was in 1905 that a forty-four acre shoreland property was secured at Sawyer, Mich. Three men, G. Arvid Hagstrom, Charles Palm and James Magnuson headed this project, which became known as Bethany Beach, the thought being to make it a place of rest and recreation, under Christian direction and auspices, for members of the churches in the Chicago area. There it was that the first assembly of the Chicago Baptist young people was held in 1924. It was the desire of the leaders of this movement to make it a Baptist chautauqua.[41] Bethany Beach is still a popular Christian resort place, but the assembly program of the Illinois young people has been transferred to Round Lake, Ill., where the Illinois Conference has secured a sizeable tract of land with excellent accommodations for camp programs, which have been conducted there since 1945.

The New York Conference and the Minnesota Conference began their summer training programs away from a camp site. The New York Conference had its first meeting in the Bridgeport, Connecticut church, later moving the summer assembly programs to Elim Park. The first Minnesota assembly was conducted at Bethel Institute in the summer of 1925, as was the second one the following year. Since then the assemblies have met at various places including Mille Lacs Lake, near Isle; Spectacle Lake, near Cambridge; Lake Geneva, near Alexandria; and now on Conference owned property on picturesque Trout Lake, north of Brainerd.

Several of the district conferences own their own assembly grounds; namely, the Columbia Conference, at Lake Retreat; the Alberta, Canada Conference, at Red Lake; the Minnesota Conference, at Trout Lake; the Wisconsin Conference, at Wood Lake; the Illinois Conference, at Round Lake; the Mid-Atlantic Conference at Elim Park and the New England Conference at Lake Tispaquin.

Space does not permit a full treatment of each of the summer assemblies and numerous Bible camps which are conducted by the various district conferences. A brief sketch of only one of these camps will give a picture of the development which has taken place in each conference over this same period.

---

[40] Lager, Carl H. *Forty Years.* p. 32.

[41] *Svenska Standaret,* Sept. 16, 1924.

The Wisconsin young people found that attending assemblies conducted by other Baptist groups outside of the Conference fellowship did not bring the inspiration nor the unifying spirit necessary for the promotion of a strong Union. Hence, in January, 1933, members of the Wisconsin Young People's Union, together with members of the executive board of the Wisconsin Swedish Baptist Conference, laid plans to conduct their own summer assembly at Wood Lake, a few miles east of Grantsburg.

Usually in projects like this there is a key personality, around whom the success of the program pivots. Beside the faithful leadership of the local pastors, H. L. Peterson and R. A. Dahlquist, there was an indefatigable layman, Philip Carlson of Grantsburg. He was an astute business man with a will to get things done, to make the impossible possible. He gave the use of his two cottages, located at the northern end of beautiful Wood Lake, and obtained the use of other grounds and property. Plans were made for fifty at the first camp in the summer of 1933, but one hundred nineteen came. Philip Carlson met the demand by supplying every need.

This camp was an overwhelming success. Many decisions were made that have continued to bear much fruit. In 1937 the Conference purchased property for the assembly on Wood Lake. Soon thereafter a dining hall, a tabernacle, cottages, and other modern conveniences were added to the property to make it one of the finer assembly grounds in the country.[42]

In the Wisconsin Conference, as in nearly every district conference, the young people were assisted by the conference in the promotion of the assembly programs. In some instances the youth organizations were not sufficiently strong to take over the heavy responsibilties of an assembly program.

What has been the attraction of these camp programs? Young people have enjoyed genuine Christian fellowship. The keynote in each camp is not recreation, but re-creation — seeking to lead young people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ that they may become "new creations." Well arranged curriculums including Bible survey, character studies, personal evangelism, Baptist history and distinctives, Sunday school methods and techniques, missionary appeals, as well as many other subjects have been presented. Pastors, evangelists, conference workers, teachers from Bethel, and missionaries have served on the faculties of the various camps.

---

[42] Tyberg, Othelia. "A Layman in God's Business," *Ebenezer, 1945,* p. 48–51.

Perhaps the summer assembly and Bible camp program is the largest contributing agency in supplying full time gospel workers both at home and abroad. Many a young person has come home from a summer assembly, sent in his application to Bethel, and in a few years has gone out into active service for the Lord Jesus Christ.

To point out the rapid development of this camp program, the records show that in 1944 there were 14 camps reporting with 2,150 campers,[43] whereas in 1948 there were 42 camps reporting, with 3,991 campers. During this same year, 1948, there were reported 421 conversions, 282 reconsecrations, 165 decisions for Christian service, and 46 who signed up for God's Invasion Army.[44] Beside these statistics there are also the results of social contacts; many a romance has budded and flowered into a beautiful Christian home. Then too, the opportunity of bringing people together to talk over common problems as well as related opportunities develops a strong denominational loyalty which augurs well for a favorable future in the Baptist General Conference.

General Conference Youth Organizations

One of the early indications that the Swedish Baptist Conference was thinking of doing something constructive for the young people is found in the records of the annual meeting of the Conference, September, 1924, at Bridgeport, Connecticut. After an inspiring message by Gideon Sjolander, there were twenty young people who dedicated their lives to Jesus Christ, and in the inspiration of this moment the request was made that the moderator appoint a committee of five to study the advisability of organizing a national young people's union and present recommendations at the next annual meeting.[45] The following year the committee brought in a report at the annual Conference session in Seattle, Washington, recommending that "a Swedish Baptist Young People's organization of America be perfected."[46]

The plan was to have a separate organization in conjunction with the General Conference, meeting on Saturday during the annual sessions of the Conference. The purpose was "to bind the young people more closely to the work of the denomination, to give the young people a chance to discover and develop their talent, as well as to emphasize their relationship to God and deepen their life spiritually."[47] This proposal was tabled for one year with the suggestion that the young people take over a portion of the Saturday session during the next annual meeting.

---

[43] *Annual, Baptist General Conference,* 1947–'48, p. 111.
[44] *Annual,* Swedish Baptist General Conference, 1949–'50. p. 123.
[45] *Årsbok,* Svenska Baptistförsamlingarna inom Amerika, 1924–'25. p. 19, 20.
[46] Ibid., 1925–'26, p. 81.

It was not until 1926, at the annual session of the Conference, that a Young People's Commission of six members was elected. The original plan had been changed in one aspect, to the effect that the commission was not to be independent of the Conference but be directly responsible to that organization. Among the responsibilities were those of planning programs for young people's sessions at the General Conference, arranging the topics for the Young People's column of "The Standard," serving as a consultant agency to all of the young people's societies, and presenting recommendations to the General Conference for the furtherance of young people's activities.[48] Prominent in these united young people's activities we find H. C. Wingblade as the first chairman of the commission. Miss Esther Sabel carried on faithfully and efficiently as secretary for a number of years. Much of the success of the organization, no doubt, was due to C. Geo. Ericson, the editor of the Young People's page in "Svenska Standaret," who with youthful enthusiasm guided the young people into unexplored areas of service. For a time the Young People's Commission was united with the Bible School Commission, and now this work is being carried on by the Board of Bible School and Young People's Work. In 1932 the Young People's Commission assumed the responsibility of securing funds from the local youth organizations for the support of Rev. and Mrs. Reuben Holm, missionaries to Assam. For several years the young people contributed to this foreign missionary program.

From time to time there came suggestions from the young people that they organize a separate conference or union, such as was proposed in 1924. In 1931 such a proposal was made, but the following year the Young People's Commission replied that they did not think it advisable to begin a national young people's organization but rather to remain in their existing relationship with the General Conference.[49] In the report of the Youth Director, William Tapper, at the annual Conference held in Duluth, 1945, it was again proposed that a National Youth Fellowship be considered among the projected plans for the future.[50] In 1947, at the annual meeting of the Conference in Seattle, it was decided that "permission be granted to formulate a national youth organization within the Baptist General Conference."[51] The following year, Val Hauck was called to be the youth director of the Conference. The Conference Youth Fellowship is now an active organization promoting literature for young people's societies and seeking to unite the young people's societies of the conference churches in missionary projects both at home and abroad.

---

[47] *Årsbok,* op. cit., 1925–'26, p. 81.
[48] Ibid., 1926–'27, p. 92.
[49] *Annual,* op. cit., 1932–'33., p. 49.
[50] Ibid., 1945–'46, p. 116.

---

[51] Ibid., 1947–'48, pp. 25, 41, 110.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

MEN'S AND WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

1. WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

THE HISTORY of nearly every church is rich with incidents concerning the sacrificial labor, the missionary vision, and the practical service of the women. The organizations are not impressive; a small sewing circle or missionary society that would meet regularly for a time of devotion, study and practical work. Although not much is said about the early activities of the women, it is safe to suppose that their labors were contemporaneous with the history of the church. In fact, in not a few places the ladies' aid preceded, and paved the way for, an organized congregation. The place of the women in the church in the early part of the conference century was not one of prominence, but rather of work in the background. Without the work of the women in the church, however, many churches would have completely failed. One church, in writing about the early attempts to build their first church building, stated, "God and the Ladies' Aid built this church." Some of the methods used in gathering money have been abandoned now, but they served, nevertheless, a good purpose.

The Columbia Conference Women's Union has the oldest history. Their organization date is in June, 1893, when representatives from four churches of Western Washington — Seattle, Tacoma, Pearson and Bellingham — met at the Central Baptist Church, Seattle, to launch the new society. Mrs. August Olson was the first president, and the purpose of the society was to unite the various local women's groups for home and foreign missions. Miss Anna Johnson, missionary to the Philippines, was the first foreign missionary to be given support.[1] The most recent foreign mission appropriation was the promise to underwrite the full salary of George and Dorothy Johnson, missionaries to the North Bank, Assam. One of the chief projects of promotion close to home has been the Pacific Old People's Home in Seattle. Ten thousand dollars was raised by the women to initiate this institution. In 1945 the Swedish Baptist Women's Conference voted to merge with the Columbia Conference and become the Women's Division of the Columbia Conference.

---

[1] Swedberg, A. M. "Kvinnornas Mission," *Svenska Baptisternas Historia i Washington och Norra Idaho.* pp. 101–104.

It was at the annual Platte Valley Conference at Stromsburg, Nebraska, 1912, that the women decided to band themselves together to work for a common goal. They decided to support Miss Anna Hagquist, missionary in Omaha, and requested her to travel throughout the district conference to seek to effect an organization among the women. In 1914 officers were elected to take care of the missionary endeavors, but it was not until 1929 that there was a formal organization of the women, known as the Woman's Missionary Union of the Platte Valley Conference.[2]

The Women's Union in California was organized in Turlock, 1917, and its chief purpose was missions. For several years this Union supported E. W. Olson, missionary in Siberia, Russia, and Manchuria. On the east coast, in New England, after several preparatory meetings, an organizational meeting was held in June, 1920, at Brockton, Massachusetts. Here again home and foreign missions were the primary interests. Klingberg's Children's Home, Elim Park Home of Rest, Russian Missions, Mrs. Ekvall's School for Blind Children in China, local summer assemblies and Bible camps were all subjects of prayer and financial support.[3]

The Women's Union of Alberta, Canada was organized at Killam, 1925. For a quarter of a century it has done much to stimulate missionary interest in the local churches.

The first organization in the New York or Mid-Atlantic Conference was known as the Elim Park Kvinnoförbund (Woman's Federation) which had its beginning at Elim Park Home of Rest, July, 1927. The primary purpose was to support a nurse at the Home, and to supply needed equipment. In May, 1933, however, the group was enlarged to include a larger mission and now took the name of "The New York Conference Women's Society."

It is somewhat surprising that the Illinois Conference, which witnessed early endeavors in young people's and Sunday School work, should have to wait until March, 1932, when the Baptist Women's Union of the Illinois Conference was formed. Mrs. Oscar Ostling gave this organization its primary impetus and was elected its first president. The chief recipients of the labor and love of these ladies have been two charitable institutions: Fridhem, the Home for the Aged, and Klingberg Children's Home. The Illinois Union has also promoted the Canadian Mission Rose project. Generous support has been given to other worthy mission projects in the local and national conferences.

---

[2] Seaquist, Carl J. *The Oregon Trail.* pp. 22–23.

[3] Lager, Carl H. *Forty Years.* p. 26.

The Women's Union in Central Canada dates back to July, 1932; the Middle East Union was organized in Cleveland, Ohio, September, 1933; the Iowa Union was organized at Forest City, June, 1935; the Lower Michigan Union had its inception at Ludington, June, 1936; and the unions of South Dakota and Upper Michigan were both organized in June, 1937. In Wisconsin there is likewise an active Women's Union at work for the Master.

The Minnesota Union was preceded by two "Kvinnoförbund," (Women's Federations) one in Duluth-Superior, organized in 1930, and the other, the "Bethel Institute Kvinnoförbund," which came into existence in 1916, largely under the influence of Mrs. Olof Bodien, who for many years served as its president. The latter group, which is still in existence, has helped to supply necessary equipment for the School dormitories, and was the early promoter of the young women's dormitory at Bethel, the Bodien Residence. It was not until August, 1935, that the Minnesota Women's Union was formed. The growth may be indicated by the financial receipts; in the first year the Union received $215.18 and during 1950 a total of $5,919.77. The object of all these organizations of women has consistently been to spread the gospel at home and abroad, and to nourish and encourage a Bible centered faith and a holy walk.

The Board of Women's Work

With the watchword of the great pioneer missionary, William Carey, "Attempt great things for God and expect great things from God," the Women's Commission of the Baptist General Conference was launched in 1932. After the report of the Bethel Kvinnoförbund was given at the annual session of the Baptist Conference, a lively discussion followed about giving the women a more prominent part in the conference program. It was decided that a Women's Commission be created with six members.[4] Mrs. Erick Johnson, St. Paul, became the first president. The objectives, as taken from the by-laws adopted by the Board of Women's Work in Seattle, Washington, 1947, are as follows: "To unite the women of our churches in fellowship and service for God and our denomination, to promote interest in the missionary projects supported by our conference, to place the specific needs of our conference before our women's missionary circles, to place on the hearts of the women, individually and in groups, the ministry of prayer for our denominational work."

---

[4] *Annual,* Swedish Baptist Churches of America. 1932–'33, pp. 8, 13.

The year following the organization, two important projects were presented to the women of the Conference; namely, the Bethel Penny-a-meal, and support of the home mission program. This later project was centered in the Canadian mission with the promotion of the Conference Rose. The total income for the first year amounted to $130.00 as compared with $29,769.64 for 1951.

When the General Conference revised its constitution and by-laws in 1945, the Women's Commission was changed to "The Board of Women's Work," with a membership of ten. Several projects have enlisted the support of the women, but at the present time the program includes: the Canadian Mission Rose; the Girls' Missionary Guild with its specific missionary projects; the Conference Headquarters' Furnishing Fund; Missionary Education, and the Literature Project, which prepares the annual program manual, promotes the Prayer Tryst, and sponsors the Reading Contest; the Penny-a-Meal project for Bethel; the White Cross projects, and the Woman's Page of "The Standard." The women have also taken an active part in the World Relief program of the Conference.

2. MEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

The men did not formally organize into societies or unions in the early days, for the main burden of the management of the church affairs fell upon the shoulders of the men. The activities of the local, district and national conferences provided some opportunities for expression. However, although the men did have the opportunity for Christian service in the local area, the ministers, missionaries and other religious workers were the ones who primarily monopolized the affairs of the larger conferences, due, no doubt, to the fact that these individuals were especially trained for this work; they were in a position to give special attention and time to these important projects.

When the Conference was passing through perilous financial waters, it was the Swedish Baptist Laymen's movement that came to the fore to steady the ship and bring it safely through. At the annual session of the Baptist General Conference, at Minneapolis in 1918, G. Arvid Hagstrom, president of Bethel Institute, reported that the Laymen's Movement had united to promote the conference program and raise the funds necessary to meet the deficit in the school budget. The early leaders of this organization were J. E. Spann, A. F. Holmer and

George Earl.[5] A group of twenty-one men was appointed to make a survey of the entire Conference program, and they presented many recommendations regarding the furtherance of the Conference cause. A unified budget was adopted at this time.

At the fiftieth anniversary of the school, the Laymen reported that they had raised not only enough money to pay off the school debt, but also subscribed funds of $14,000 for the Literature Department debt.[6]

This early movement among the Conference men arose out of a financial emergency, and after the emergency was over, the Laymen's Movement went out of existence. During the nineteen-twenties and thirties there were several local Brotherhood gatherings. Some churches can report Brotherhood histories of twenty-five years or more.

National Brotherhood

Although various men's fellowship groups continued to exist in a perfunctory manner largely to provide Christian fellowship in the local churches as well as between local churches in a given area, it was not until the National Brotherhood was organized that the men's work in the Conference took on definite meaning. A desire for a revival of the Laymen's movement, not simply as a fund raising group, but as a means of providing a great missionary objective for the men of the conference, was on the hearts of many men. Among these men were such as Ewald Chalberg and W. F. Widen. At the annual meeting of the Conference at Seattle, Washington, 1947, the National Men's Fellowship was born. To this infant there was given a new missionary project, the promotion and support of the mission in Alaska.[7] The Men's Fellowship has worked in cooperation with the Home Mission Board in this endeavor.

At the time the Conference constitution was revised in 1949 at Omaha, the Men's Fellowship became an integral part of the Conference when it was incorporated into the Board of Men's Work, with ten members.

[5] *Årsbok,* 1917–'18, pp. 22, 59.
[6] *Årsbok,* 1920–'21, pp. 90–91.
[7] *Annual,* 1947–'48, pp. 34, 36.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

PHILANTHROPIC INSTITUTIONS

PHILANTHROPY, charity and benevolence are essential expressions of Christianity. Charity is a virtue that is strictly confined to Judaism and Christianity, the two great revealed religions of the world, but it has found its highest and noblest expression in the religion of Jesus Christ. Philanthropy was one of the first expressions of the new born Christian church, and wherever the Christian religion has existed in its original purity, it has found expression in unselfish service to all those in need.[1]

The Conference Baptists are no exception to that rule. From their very beginning in Rock Island, Illinois, 1852, and down through the years a great amount of philanthropic service has been rendered by the local churches, in the care of members that are in need and in helping to care for the needy of the community. As a group, however, the Swedish Baptists had completed half a century of service before any organized effort was made to care for their aged men and women and for their orphans. But the Golden Jubilee in 1902 must have been an occasion of heart-searching and a test of strength. For shortly after those historical meetings one organization after another began to grow and flourish to the glory of God.[2]

THE KLINGBERG CHILDREN'S HOMES

Probably no other name in the whole denomination is better known than the name Klingberg. Especially is that true of the older generation. Readers of "Nya Wecko-Posten" and "Svenska Standaret" in former years remember with gratitude to God Klingberg's most interesting reports telling of the Lord's marvelous provision for the Children's Home. And the faith of churches and individuals was strengthened and their spiritual life was enriched as they helped God to answer Klingberg's prayers.

As a young minister in Chicago his heart was touched by the plight of the poor waifs who roamed the dirty streets of that big city.

---

[1] G. E. Wallendorf, *Årsbok,* Svenska Baptistförsamlingarna inom Amerika, 1926–1927, p. 101.

[2] Backlund, *Swedish Baptists,* op. cit., p. 118.

Each summer, as he conducted simple classes for stray children gathered up off the streets the longing to do something definite for them would rise up again.[3] After Klingberg had moved to New Britain, Connecticut, where he assumed the pastoral care of the Swedish Baptist church, and after much prayer and heart-searching, God revealed His will to him that he was to start a home for destitute and neglected children. An intimate and saintly friend, whose advice he had sought, assured him: "Yes, I understand and I think you are right; may God bless you."[4]

As a wise and careful builder Klingberg realized that a good basis was indispensible, and after thoughtful consideration of the matter, the following plan was adopted:

> 1. The Home should be established with a view of giving orphans and destitute children home, education, and Christian training, and that children should be admitted regardless of nationality or religious affiliation.
> 2. That for the support of the work we should trust in God and make all our wants known to Him in prayer, and wait patiently for His help.
> 3. That the work should stimulate other believers to greater activity for the Kingdom of God, and be for the increase of their faith in Him.
> 4. To prove to the world that the Word of God is true and that He answers prayer today just as much as He did in times past.[5]

It was in the month of May, 1903, that God's time had come for His Servant Klingberg to move forward. The plan for the Children's Home had been made, but only on paper. The great adventure in faith of putting the plans to a test was imminent. On his way home from church one Sunday evening Klingberg met a policeman who appeared much upset. He said:

> You are just the one I have been looking for. There are three little boys who have been deserted out in a small hut just outside the city limits. They're hungry and lonely. Do you know of anyone who would go out and get them and give them a home?[6]

The kind-hearted preacher, who for years had prayerfully considered the possibility of starting a home for poor and neglected children, did not hesitate at that time. He knew it was God's open door for him and he was anxious to enter into his promised land — a land that was to become, in succeeding years, for the "Adventurer in Faith" so rich in prayer, labor and sacrifice as well as in heavenly sunshine from the kind Father above. Hence he assured the officer that he would look up the little boys and care for them. Early the next morning he went to the place designated by the policeman and found the three cold, frightened and hungry little fellows huddled together in the broken down shack that had been their home. He talked kindly to them, dried their tears, and led them away from that place. But he had no other choice than to take them to his home. With tears his good wife wondered how they in their poverty would be able to feed and clothe three more little ones, in addition to their own family.[7]

---

[3] Irene and Robert Klingberg, *J. E. Klingberg, Adventurer in Faith,* 1948, pp. 44–45.

[4] *The Children's Home, 30th Anniversary*. New Britain, Conn. 1903–1933, p. 2.

[5] *The Children's Home,* op. cit., pp. 4–6.

[6] Klingberg, op. cit., pp. 51–52.

That day, May 20, 1903, was an epochal experience in the life of J. E. Klingberg who has been lovingly called the George Muller[8] among Swedish Baptists. And a humble beginning it was, indeed, of that well known institution of mercy, "The Home that Prayer Built," to use the caption in "The Reader's Digest" of a few years ago. Two empty hands, and a prayer-answering God! Klingberg rented a small house for the boys he had brought home from the shack. But his family increased rapidly. By the following Christmas, he had eighteen boys and girls sitting at the tables in a larger house where thirty-five children could be accommodated. Soon a second house was needed, and before long a third one, the "Babies' House," where the tiny tots, four years and under, were to be brought together. In the spring of 1911 the fourth house was opened, and by 1916 Klingberg had five houses in which he cared for 97 children: 55 boys and 42 girls.[9] And so the family of the kind benefactor increased from year to year until by 1941, after thirty-eight years, it could be reported that not less than 1,100 children had been cared for.[10]

And where did the money come from to feed so many hungry mouths? A prayer-answering God is the only answer. It is safe to say that J. E. Klingberg during his lifetime prayed forth well over one million dollars from the bountiful storehouse of the Lord. However, do not think for a moment that it was an easy road to travel even though the Good Shepherd was always there to lead in paths of righteousness. Sometimes the storm clouds lowered, and dark shadows enveloped the soul of the hero of faith. The night after he had brought

[7] Ibid., pp. 51–52; *The Children's Home,* op. cit., p. 6; *Nya Wecko-Posten,* June 9, 1903; *Nya Wecko-Postens Kalender* 1904, pp. 194–195.

[8] George Muller was the founder of the orphanages in Bristol, England, a great faith institution.

[9] *Nya Wecko-Postens Kalender,* 1916, p. 106. Klingberg, op. cit., p. 86.

[10] *Annual,* Swedish Baptist Churches of America, Part I, 1941–1942, p. 114.

home the three boys, who became Klingberg's first care, he could not sleep. The tempter filled his heart with doubt and despair. After struggling alone until it seemed he could bear it no longer, he called his wife and said, "Please come and pray for me. My peace is gone. I am afraid I am lost." It was a long dark night. But with the rising of the sun came peace and the assurance, "The Lord is My Shepherd; I shall not want."[11]

The story of the man of prayer and God's gracious and remarkable answers is a thrilling one. Klingberg's encouraging reports in "Nya Wecko-Posten" and "Svenska Standaret" about his experiences in the school of prayer lifted thousands of Swedish Baptists nearer to the heart of God. Sometimes even unbelievers were providentially led to share in the work of mercy and love, as the following experience proves:

> One Saturday, the second summer after we had moved the children to Cook's corner, it so happened that we had no money and no food for the following Sunday. Without telling anyone of our plight we waited patiently upon God for help. On that same day a bartenders' union had an outing, but as the day was somewhat cloudy and cold, they did not get the crowd of people they had expected, and consequently much food was left over. The men had evidently heard of the Children's Home, and as they went back to the city by trolley they stopped in front of the house, and two of them came with a clothes basket filled with all kinds of good things to eat, left it on the veranda and hurried back to the car that was waiting for them. We received the food as from God in answer to prayer and thanked Him for it.[12]

Most of the time it pleased the Lord to provide the needs, not for the distant future, but for a day at a time, or a few days only. Thus the man of prayer learned to walk by faith in humble dependence upon a kind Heavenly Father. On the night of July 15, 1905, Klingberg wrote in his diary: "I had thirty-seven cents this afternoon. I gave it to one of the matrons to be used in the Girls' House. So tonight there is not a cent left in the treasury."[13]

Even little children throughout the country were captured by his faith and love, and rejoiced in sending gifts to the Children's Home, as the following letter indicates:

> Dear Mr. Klingberg:
>
> My papa gave me a little pig last spring and now it is big. Papa sold it and I got $20.00 for it. I am going to send you five dollars out

---

[11] Klingberg, op. cit., pp. 54–55.

[12] *The Children's Home,* op. cit., p. 14.

[13] Klingberg, op. cit., p. 73.

of this money for the children. I will be four years old the eleventh of March.

I am your little friend.[14]

Boundless gratitude to the Giver of every good and perfect gift must have been the emotional reaction when Klingberg in December, 1908, received his first large donation of $5,000 for the Building Fund. A year later he received an equal amount for the same purpose. However, there were many years of patient waiting before his dream building could be realized. For the founder of the Children's Home would not move faster than the Lord supplied the funds. Finally, after years of praying and waiting, the children were gathered from their scattered homes in rented quarters and marched up the Hill, singing hymns as they went. It was a beautiful summer day, in July of 1922, when Klingberg with his helpers and 130 children moved into their own home, located on a hill overlooking the city of New Britain and the picturesque Connecticut Valley below. Truly, that was the day which the Lord had made.

From year to year the "Home that Prayer Built" is filled to capacity, about 125 to 135, with happy children who receive constant care both physical and spiritual. On the 6th day of June, 1946, J. E. Klingberg, beloved of all Conference Baptists and many others, as he walked the streets of Hartford, Connecticut, intent on some errand for the Home, suddenly moved out of his earthly body and went to be with Him whom he had loved.[15] His son Haddon, who, some time before, had become associated with his father in the care of the Home, carries on in the traditions of the Founder.

In the fall of 1926 the adventurous Klingberg started a second Children's Home in Chicago, located on West 63rd Place. In 1938 another building was secured at 6522 Harvard Avenue. For the first ten years, Klingberg's daughter Mabel was in charge of the Chicago home, which had on an average 20 to 25 children. The last few years Wayne Swenson has served as superintendent, and the Chicago churches have taken a vital interest in the Home.

HOMES FOR THE AGED

If it is pleasing in the sight of God to care for destitute boys and girls, it is certainly just as much in harmony with the divine law of love to provide for the aged pilgrims who have given their lives in the service of the Lord and their fellowmen, when they are no longer

[14] Ibid., p. 72.

[15] Ibid., p. 194.

able to care for themselves. At the turn of the century, the Conference Baptists began to rally in a wonderful way to this form of philanthropy.

No one's name was so closely interwoven with this work as the name of Eric Rosen, then pastor of the Englewood Swedish Baptist Church (Emerald Avenue) of Chicago. This man who was as tall in stature as the giant pine trees of his native land, rose to think and dream far above the level of the average individual. He was a true patriot, an ideal pastor, a friend, a man with sympathies broad enough to make him feel akin to every man and woman of his nationality. We remember him as he stood in our large gatherings and conferences pleading for the aged, urging the denomination to organize an old people's home.[16]

Fridhem, Home of Rest, Chicago

Eric Rosen who was really the founder of Fridhem, also took a very active part in the founding of a number of other projects of a philanthropic and semi-philanthropic nature in the Chicago area, such as the Englewood Hospital, the Swedish Mutual Aid Association, and the Oak Hill Cemetery. Nobody seems to know just when Rosen began to talk of an old people's home. For years, however, there never was a meeting of the General Conference when he did not plead for the project so near to his heart. It must have been a great joy, therefore, for the sympathetic preacher to announce to the General Conference, meeting at Big Springs, South Dakota, September 13–16, 1899, the receipt of a gift of $25.00 toward an old people's home.[17] To be sure, twenty-five dollars would not go far in the building of an institution! But the gift came from a woman whose heart had been touched by Rosen's appeals in favor of the old and the poor. Her name was Edla Berg, owner of a small bakery shop in the Lake View district of Chicago, and a member of the First Swedish Baptist Church (Addison Street Church). The money had been turned over to her pastor, G. Arvid Hagstrom, who in turn gave it to the man who was the agitator and pioneer in the work.[18] The following year Rosen reported to the Conference, held at St. Paul, Minnesota, September 19–22, 1900, that by means of a concert held in his own church, Englewood, Chicago, the fund for an old people's home had been increased to $100.00[19]

---

[16] Eric Scherstrom, *Fridhem, A Brief History of a Noble Work,* 1905–1930, pp. 14–15.

[17] *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Sept. 27, 1899; see also *Årsbok,* op. cit., 1899–1900, p. 12.

[18] Scherstrom, op. cit., p. 14. Backlund, *Swedish Baptists,* pp. 120–121. Jakob Bystrom, *En Folkväckelsens Apostel, Eric Rosen, Hans Liv och Verksamhet,* 1843–1922, pp. 93–94.

[19] *Årsbok,* 1900–1901, p. 24. *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Oct. 3, 1900.

Verily, "God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform." In the fall of 1902 sorrow visited a happy home in Evanston, Illinois, when the young and promising son of Dr. and Mrs. N. P. Walters was taken to be with the Lord. After prayer and consultation with G. Arvid Hagstrom, pastor of the First Swedish Baptist Church in Chicago, the grief-stricken parents decided to give one thousand dollars in memory of their boy. This money was to go toward an old people's home if the denomination decided to organize such an institution.[20] Rosen's dream was beginning to be realized. There was no longer any doubt about God's will in the matter of making definite plans for such a home. A few days after the receipt of that gift, in the month of November, 1902, the Fridhem Society was organized, and the following officers elected: Eric Sandell, president; Petrus Swartz, vice president; John Berg, secretary; and N. P. Walters, treasurer. On January 14, 1903, another meeting was called, when it was decided to incorporate. It was agreed that the corporate name should be, "Home of Rest, Swedish Baptist Home for the Aged, Fridhem," and the object of the association was thus stated: "to provide a home and place of rest for aged and destitute Swedish Baptists and other worthy persons in need of a temporary or permanent home."[21] For several reasons it seemed best that the Home should not be owned and operated by the General Conference, or the State Conference, but rather by an independent corporation, as is the case of all the philanthropic institutions of the Conference Baptists.

In February, 1905, the home was opened in an old residence at 236 Sunnyside Avenue, Chicago. Mrs. Charles Palm, whose husband at that time served as Sunday school missionary in Illinois, became the first matron. She was exceptionally well qualified for the position because of her executive ability, her friendly disposition, and her wide circle of acquaintance all over the country. The first resident, John Gunnerson of Kiron, Iowa, had arrived on January the twenty-eighth. This eighty year old man had been deserted by his children and was facing the poor farm in his declining years.[22] Within five months of its opening the home had nine members.

However, since the institution was not self-supporting, it would be necessary to inaugurate a plan for the raising of funds. Pastor C. J. Almquist of Sioux City, Iowa, accepted a call to this task in May,

---

[20] Scherstrom, op. cit., pp. 18–19. *Home of Rest, Fridhem,* p. 3.

[21] Ernest E. Olson, *History of the Swedes of Illinois,* Part I, p. 581, Chicago, 1908.

[22] Scherstrom, op. cit., pp. 21–23.

1905, and continued until 1911, when ill health necessitated a change of climate and occupation. He was a man full of sympathy for the unfortunate, and gifted with a peculiar ability to make contributing friends for the Home. Through his solicitation, a continuous income was secured. During the first six months he raised $7,000 in cash and subscriptions. Later on, Almquist promoted other institutions of mercy with marked success.

The rented quarters soon became inadequate, and it became necessary to seek a permanent location. After careful consideration, Morgan Park, near the Theological Seminary, was finally chosen as the most suitable place. In December 1905 a site of approximately three acres was secured in that beautiful suburb of Chicago at a price of $4,500. The next year a building was erected, with a north wing added 1914, and a south wing in 1919. These additions having been completed, the value of the home was estimated at $146,416.85.[23] In recent years a hospital unit and a beautiful chapel have also been added. The number of residents in the Home varies from 55 to 65.

Fridhem derives its income from several sources. At the time of its founding, after a careful study, it was agreed to demand an admission fee, based on a sliding scale, and depending on the age of the applicant and ability to pay: those sixty to sixty-five were to pay $300.00; sixty-five to seventy, $250.00; seventy to seventy-five, $200.00; above seventy-five, $150.00.

> When we see what the Home proposed to give in return, we can well realize how insufficient this sum was. The inmate was to get a permanent home, a well furnished room, heated and lighted, clothing, laundry, doctor's care, medicine, hospital attention if necessary, incidental cash, and finally a respectable last resting place. No matter how long or short a length of time the individual might remain at the home, his entrance fee would never cover his total expenses.[24]

Some years ago it became necessary to raise the minimum admission fee to $1,000.00, or more if the applicant had other property. However, even these rules have been made elastic when needy cases have required special consideration.[25] At any rate, it is evident that Fridhem is an institution of benevolence and Christian love. Churches and individuals contribute more or less regularly larger and smaller gifts toward its support. Occasionally wills and bequests augment the treasury. The annual Tag Day in Chicago sponsored by the "Chicago Social Agency for Children and Adult Charity" has netted substantial sums to the Home each year.

---

[23] Ibid., pp. 26–30. Backlund, op. cit., p. 122. *Nya Wecko-Postens Kalender,* 1916, p. 104. *Svenska Standaret,* Febr. 20, 1923. *Årsbok,* 1907, pp. 61-64.

[24] Scherstrom, op. cit., p. 37.

[25] Backlund, op. cit., p. 122.

The home has been fortunate in having a number of efficient and devoted superintendents and other workers: Mrs. Charles Palm, 1905–1907; Carrie Rosenquist, 1907–1912; Reverend and Mrs. O. Ellison, 1912–1916; Reverend and Mrs. Charles Palm, 1916–1924; Reverend and Mrs. Albert Rose, 1924–1933; Mrs. Carrie Rosenquist Brosell, 1933–1935; and Reverend and Mrs. John Ward, 1935–.

Undoubtedly many of the old pilgrims who, through the years, have found a haven of rest at Fridhem (Home of Peace) have felt what Pastor Westerberg experienced in 1911 as he approached the place that was to be his home in his declining years.

> When the old gentleman saw the Home at a distance he began to cry like a child, and his steps became more shaky than those of most sailors. Turning in toward the entrance from the sidewalk he fell on his knees on the icy pavement and thanked God for leading him to a place where earthly cares would end.[26]

Sunset Home, Concordia, Kansas

Sunset Home is located in the wealthy farm-belt of the Sunflower State, Kansas. Like most institutions of its kind it originated in the mind of one man before it took concrete form. It was August Johnson, "the Kansas Apostle" and unselfish pioneer preacher, referred to in previous pages, who recognized the need of an old people's home and gave the first impetus toward its realization. He also gave the first donation of $100.00 for the home, he became the first resident of the institution, and the first one, too, to end his pilgrimage there.[27]

At a meeting in Chanute, February 18, 1905 August Johnson's dream began to take concrete form; for then and there it was decided to build a home for old people in the state of Kansas. A fund amounting to $625.00 was subscribed at that time, and a board was elected, composed of ministers and laymen of Swedish Baptist churches within the state. The board was incorporated December 20, 1905, under the name of "Sunset Home Society." A house was purchased at Clay Center, Kansas, which became the first location of the Home. Actual operation of the institution was begun toward the end of 1907, with

[26] Scherstrom, op. cit., pp. 64–65.

[27] P. Lovene, *History of the Swedish Baptist Churches of Kansas and Missouri,* 1869–1927, p. 82. *Årsbok,* 1908–1909, p. 54. *Nya Wecko-Postens Kalender,* 1916, p. 106.

August Johnson as the first resident and Isaac Hedberg as the first superintendent.

In 1911 the Home was moved to Concordia, where a fine site consisting of eight acres of ground on Sunset Hill, in the west part of Concordia, overlooking the beautiful city and the rich and picturesque valley along the Republican River, makes Sunset Home an attractive place indeed for old pilgrims on their way to the land of eternal sunrise. Here a building was erected to accommodate twenty-eight people, the thought being mainly to provide for Baptist people of Swedish blood.[28] For a small group of people like the Swedish Baptist Conference of Kansas, it was a rather heroic attempt to erect and finance such a home. In 1921 the program of the home was greatly enlarged by extending to the Kansas Baptist State Convention an invitation to share the institution with the Swedish Baptists. The invitation was accepted, and a second unit was added to the home, doubling its capacity. The new addition was dedicated November 30, 1924. The whole property at that time was valued at about $125,000.[29] In 1926 the Home had 31 old people in the Swedish part, and 25 in the State Convention building. Gradually that proportion was reversed so that out of a total of 55 inmates in 1941 only 12 were of Swedish descent.[30]

Like Fridhem, Sunset Home is supported through entrance fees, donations, annuities, and by friends of the institution who remember it in their wills. In 1918 Fred Carlson of Topeka accepted the responsibility of manager of the Home, and, together with his wife, carried on for some twelve years and experienced great success in the raising of funds and in caring for the old people. He was succeeded by Robert Larson, J. Paul Erickson, C. A. Carlson, and the present incumbent, A. B. Nelson.

Elim Park Home of Rest, Shelton, Connecticut

Originally Elim Park was not planned to be an old people's home but rather a quiet vacation place out in the country for tired city people who needed rest and recreation. That original objective has also been maintained throughout the years, for the spacious grounds of eighty acres have become a popular resort and vacation spot with camping facilities for boys and girls. Every summer largely attended assemblies for young folk, Bible conferences, and other meetings are held at Elim Park.[31]

---

[28] Backlund, op. cit., p. 123.

[29] *Årsbok,* 1926–1927, p. 103.

[30] *Annual,* Swedish Baptist Churches of America, 1941–1942, p. 115.

[31] *Elim Park, Historik,* 1907–1910, p. 4.

It cannot be determined with certainty who was the first to suggest a home of rest for the eastern area. However, the records show that a meeting was held May 15, 1906, in the first Swedish Baptist Church, Brooklyn, N. Y., when it was decided to appoint a committee to explore the possibility of starting such an institution. Prominent in that committee, as it appears, were the pastors, O. J. Engstrand of Brooklyn and Emil Friborg of New York City, together with Mary Melby. For some twenty years Mary Melby had worked in New York City as missionary among the immigrants, primarily those of Swedish nationality. In that service she became known to thousands who had come to seek a home in the New World, and she was the first one to give the stranger on the foreign shore a loving word of welcome. Hers was a ministry of encouragement, comfort, help, and advice to people in all kinds of trouble. With such a background it was only natural that Mary Melby would be the one to propose the organization of a society whose duty it would be to establish a home of rest and recreation for those in need of such.[32]

At a subsequent meeting held at the First Swedish Baptist Church, New York City, April 2, 1907, it was reported that a suitable location for a home of rest had been found in Connecticut. It was an eighty acre farm with some buildings on it, beautifully situated on the banks of the Housatonic River, some nine miles from the city of Bridgeport. The purchase price was $10,000. The association that had been formed was duly incorporated May 21, 1907 under the name of "The Swedish Baptist Home of Rest, Elim Park," and the following day the purchase of the property was consummated. On June 24, a grand dedication took place which brought large crowds of people from near and far. The celebrations were concluded with a New Testament baptism of several believers in the nearby river, this signifying that the property and the Home belonged to the Baptists.[33]

As stated above, the original plan was to create a place of rest and recreation, a Christian summer resort. However, it soon became evident that the need for an old people's home in the eastern district was becoming increasingly acute. Thus it came about that on December 10, 1907, it was decided to expand the service of the Home to include permanent care of old people.[34] By 1910 there were eleven old pilgrims who had found a haven of rest in the Elim Park Home. A three story building, containing 28 rooms, was erected in 1909, and an addition was built a few years later. In 1951 it was reported that the Home had 55 members, guests, and employees.

---

[32] Ibid., p. 4. *Elim Park Vilo och Ålderdomshem,* 1925, pp. 16–17.

[33] *Elim Park, Historik,* 1907–1910, p. 6. *Årsbok,* Svenska Baptistförsamlingarna, 1909–1910, pp. 71–72.

[34] *Historik,* 1907–1910, p. 8.

It was peculiarly fitting that Mary Melby, who in unselfish love had contributed so much to the founding of the Home, should become its first matron. In that capacity she served with efficiency and devotion until ill health necessitated her retirement in 1920. Others with a long term of service were Reverend and Mrs. G. W. Lindstrom, who were in charge of Elim Park for some ten years, 1922–1932, Reverend and Mrs. A. O. Lundeen serving about the same length, and Reverend and Mrs. Ernest E. Nelson since 1951. Among the many generous supporters and true friends of the Elim Park Home of Rest, the late Jacob Nelson stands in the front ranks. He served as chairman of the Board for many years. In his quiet and reserved way he was always on the alert to be of service. Unsparingly he gave of his time, his means and of his noble personality to help and enrich others, and that without ever looking for credit or praise from man.[35] Nor were his services and benevolences limited to the Elim Park Home. The whole General Conference in its various departments benefited much by the generosity of that good man.

The Verdugo Home, Los Angeles, California

In the history of God's Kingdom in the world, as well as in the experience of individual believers, it is a source of comfort and strength to discern as a basic factor divine providence, God's guidance and tender care of His own. In the origin of "Verdugo Home," formerly the "Swedish Baptist Pacific Home" of Los Angeles, that element, the hand and leading of God, became a great source of comfort and strength to the founders. As previously recorded, C. J. Almquist had ministered for many years with unusual success as financial agent for the Fridhem Old People's Home in Chicago. Since his heart was very tender and responsive to the needs of the old people, being a real apostle of love in the field of philanthropic work, it was only natural that after his removal to California to repair his health, God would continue to use him in the same kind of service. Thus, while he traveled as a missionary in California, having been entrusted with the task of raising $12,000 as a mission fund for the State Conference, he came on a visit to Oakland. It was then that the incident occurred, so definitely providential, which became the starting point of the Verdugo Home. A young man placed into the hand of the missionary a little envelope containing a five dollar gold piece and the words written on it, "For the Swedish Old People's Home."[36] Verily, it was the finger of God! Almquist shared his experience with the members of the California Swedish Baptist Conference, and the brethren at once caught the vision and offered their services to the new cause.

---

[35] *Annual Report,* Swedish Baptist Home of Rest. Elim Park, Shelton, Conn., 1949, pp. 5, 10.

The next step in the development of the realization of an old people's home was taken in 1918, when one Mrs. C. Volland, Los Angeles, donated a large residence for that purpose. Then there was hardly anything to do but to move forward and take the third step. And that was to elect C. J. Almquist to promote the work and travel in California and the other western states to solicit funds for the home. Success crowned his efforts from the very beginning, and ere long an association was formed, an executive board was elected, and the Home was legally incorporated in the state of California October 6, 1919.[37] Soon the Home started its activities at 222 West 41st Street, Los Angeles, the residence given by Mrs. Volland, accepting four guests for life care. After a careful survey the Board succeeded in securing two acres of land on Verdugo Road, within the city limits of Los Angeles, but near Pasadena, Eagle Rock, and Glendale. This property was purchased in 1920 at the comparatively low price of $7,000. In 1929 it was valued at about $60,000. The first building was erected on this land in 1922, and ready for occupation in October the same year. A wing was added in 1928 nearly doubling the capacity of the Home.

In the early years of the Home, C. J. Almquist served not only as promotional secretary but also as non-resident superintendent. After the new building had been completed and the family of the Home had increased in number, the need presented itself for a resident superintendent. Reverend and Mrs. Alfred Lindblom assumed that responsibility in 1923, to be followed by Reverend and Mrs. Nels Lidney in 1926, and Reverend and Mrs. Henning Lindberg in 1937. In later years Reverend and Mrs. Charles Sundstrom, Reverend and Mrs. K. E. Byleen, and Reverend and Mrs. Fred Moberg have served in the same capacity, the latter still holding the fort.

The Home is licensed for 50 guests, and there is generally a waiting list. All are life contract members; there are no boarders. Almost all the members come from Swedish Baptist churches on the west coast, and the majority, as in all Old People's Homes, are women.

---

[36] *The Swedish Baptist Pacific Home,* 1919–1929, pp. 8, 9.

[37] *The Swedish Baptist Pacific Home,* Social Study 1942, p. 2.

Other Old People's Homes

It was to be expected that Minnesota, having about one fourth of the Conference Baptist membership, should have at least one home for the old people. Such an institution was founded in Thief River Falls of the Red River Valley area in 1943 under the name "Red River Valley Home for the Aged." V. L. Peterson, the well known leader of "The Midwest Hebrew Mission," became instrumental in the origin of the Red River Valley Home, and he and Ray Hanson served for some time respectively as superintendent and assistant superintendent. In 1946 Reverend Alfred Larson assumed the leadership of the Home, with Mrs. Larson serving as matron. The hand of the Lord was clearly seen in the securing of a building at the unusually moderate price of $5,000, without interest. There were no funds at hand. But the prayer answering God supplied all the needs. After some repairs, the building was ready for occupancy, and the first guests moved in. The property at present is valued at $24,000. The Home has a capacity of forty-two resident members.

The women of the Columbia Conference, who always have been aggressive and forward looking, at their forty-seventh annual meeting at Everett, Washington, in June, 1940, broached the question of the great need of a home for the aged in the Pacific Northwest. A committee was appointed to explore the possibility of such a project, and the first offering of $69.91 was received two years later. In 1943 a committee was named by the Columbia Conference to cooperate with the women's committee. An association was formed to bring the plan to realization, and a Board of Trustees was elected in January, 1944. The name "Baptist Rest Home" of Seattle was adopted. The same year the present property was purchased for a consideration of $10,000, and, after necessary improvements and remodeling, the house was in shape to receive its first three guests in the fall of 1944. Reverend and Mrs. David Larson became the first manager and matron of the Home. Mrs. Ole Haglund assumed the responsibility of matron in the summer of 1946. Recently the Seattle Home has enlarged its quarters to provide private rooms for twenty-five more persons.[38]

"The Oregon Baptist Retirement Home" of Portland, Oregon, was founded October 29, 1944, the same year that the Home in Seattle was organized. The Columbia Conference, which of late has grown and expanded in several directions in a most extraordinary way, thus has two homes for the aged within its area. It was Linus Johnson, the aggressive pastor of the Conference Baptist church of Portland, who, together with a number of his wide awake members in the church, founded the Portland Home. A Methodist Deaconess Home was purchased for about $15,000, and dedicated December 2, 1945. An annex of 22 rooms was added in 1948. Reverend and Mrs. David M. Anderson served as the first superintendent and matron, being succeeded by Mrs. Vera Swanson and her sister, Miss Evelyn Oster, in 1950. In 1951 the home had 29 guests, some of whom were life contract members and others boarders on a monthly basis.[39]

---

[38] *Fifth Anniversary,* Baptist Rest Home, Seattle, Wash., 1950.

MOUNDS AND MIDWAY HOSPITALS

It was a kind-hearted and progressive business man in St. Paul, Minnesota, by the name of Nels Lindahl, member of the Payne Avenue Baptist Church, who first conceived the idea of Mounds Park Sanitarium. He had been a patient in the hospital of another denomination, and that experience caused him to realize the need of such an institution among Swedish Baptists.[40] Mr. Lindahl shared his thoughts with Robert Earl, a young St. Paul physician and member of the same church. Other Swedish Baptist leaders soon caught the vision which was translated into action March 1, 1905, when the "Mounds Park Sanitarium Association" was incorporated. The same year one half of the block on which the Sanitarium is located was purchased. During the year 1906 the main building was erected. The first patient was admitted January 7, 1907.

At an unusually rapid pace the young institution grew and expanded. During the first year of operation it became necessary to purchase more land adjoining the Sanitarium, upon which was erected a home for nurses. More property in land and buildings was added from time to time, including by 1916 the entire block. A new wing of the main building was constructed in 1915. An enlarged program in 1922 involved the purchase of the Merrian Park Hospital and the Midway Hospital, located midway between St. Paul and Minneapolis. The name was changed to "The Northwestern Baptist Hospital Association," which enlisted the interest of the general Baptist constituency of the Northwest in this undertaking. That change in the government of the institution brought to an end the history of Mounds Park Sanitarium as a distinctly Swedish Baptist project. A large and strictly modern hospital was later erected in the Midway district, taking the place of the two smaller Midway units.

---

[39] *Notes on Oregon Baptist Retirement Home.*

[40] *Årsbok,* Svenska Baptistförsamlingarna. 1928–1929, p. 101. *Bethel Herald,* Feb., 1918, pp. 17, 18.

The School of Nursing started only a few months after the opening of Mounds Park Sanitarium, and later known as the Mounds-Midway School of Nursing, is one of the more outstanding features of the work that is being carried on. With Miss Mary Danielson as the official superintendent for some thirty years, the school has provided excellent training to more than one thousand young women not only in the profession of healing but also, which is even more important, in a wholesome spiritual and Christian atmosphere. Many of these nurses have through the years been serving Christ in the foreign mission fields.[41]

As is ordinarily true of all similar institutions, the hospital has carried on a large amount of mercy work for those in need. Particularly was that the case in the early history of Mounds Park Sanitarium. Swedish Baptists also contributed liberally toward the support of the work. In later years Dr. George Earl has been the guiding genius, especially of the Midway Hospital.

[41] *Annual,* Swedish Baptist Churches of America, 1941–1942, pp. 116–117.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

TRENDS IN FAITH AND LIFE

In order rightly to evaluate the present age with all its complex problems it is essential to know and understand the past. That assumption being valid, it is easy to realize the supreme importance for the present generation of Conference Baptists to become acquainted with the faith and life, the achievements and the defeats, of the founding fathers, the pioneers on the American frontier. Such knowledge should prove a "very present help" in both preaching and practice to find the best and the true way. However, in order to make a reasonably correct comparison of the past with the present, it is necessary to have not only a clear perspective and a thorough knowledge of history but also a sense of fairness and an unyielding love of truth. For example, to place in contrast the weaknesses of the past with the virtues of the present age will just as certainly lead to a superficial and false optimism, as the opposite attitude will result in a hopeless pessimism and a glorification of the past as the good old days. The object of this chapter will be to summarize important factors which have been recorded in the previous pages of this volume, and to indicate some changes and modifications, for better or for worse, which have taken place in the course of years among the Conference Baptists.

TRENDS IN THEOLOGY

Since it should be clear to any candid reader of this record that the Conference Baptists (formerly Swedish Baptists) during the one century of their existence have loyally adhered to the evangelical emphasis of Christianity in a balanced form, both in faith and practice, naturally one would not look for any drastic changes in their basic principles. Whatever modifications have occurred are primarily in policies and methods. Toward the end of his life Spurgeon was reported to have remarked that he had never changed an opinion, and that he then preached what he did when he began his ministry.[1] If by "opinion" he meant his belief in the fundamental doctrines of the Bible, then it was undoubtedly true. On the other hand, if he referred to the "modus

[1] H. C. Vedder, *A Short History of the Baptists,* p. 418.

operandi" in his gospel work, it is quite correct to say that even the great Spurgeon followed his own times.

As has been recorded in the early part of this book (Chs. One, Two, and Five), the Swedish Baptists belonged to a group of people in Sweden known as "läsare" — readers. They were such who, after having had a profound experience of God's redeeming grace, became close students and readers of the Bible. Their faith was a Bible-centered one. Their theology was based exclusively on the Book. To them the Bible was the inspired, infallible, and authoritative Word of God. The all-important question was "What does the Bible say about it?" Its great doctrines of sin and grace, regeneration, justification, sanctification, heaven and hell, were all living realities to the pioneer. According to Olof Bodien, the state prisons of Sweden were the theological seminaries of the Swedish Baptists.[2] Their faith grew strong in times of persecution.

Moreover, ever since the famous law was enacted by the Swedish Parliament in 1842, which provided for all children in Sweden the opportunity to receive an elementary education,[3] instruction in the Bible received a prominent place on the program of every grade school. The early Swedish Baptists of America, at least for the first fifty years of their history, or as long as they remained largely an immigrant church, reaped a rich spiritual harvest from such a background. The storing up of the Word of God in the receptive mind of the child by means of a systematic study of the Bible History and the Catechism was bound to bear fruit. Young people with Bible training, and under the influence of a powerful revival preaching by the pioneer preacher, were comparatively easy to win for the Lord. For the Holy Spirit always uses the Word as an instrument in convicting men of sin. The conversion experience of such people, as a rule, was profound and decisive, and spiritual maturity also became more assured in a Bible-centered Christian. More particularly was that true since the old timers, even in the New World, continued to be "läsare." They read and searched the Scriptures both privately and around the family altar, which was an established institution in most Swedish Baptist homes a generation, or two, ago.[4]

As the American born church members gradually replaced the immigrant founders, there also appeared a discouraging trend of superficiality in Bible knowledge. The public schools of America did not provide such instruction, and the Bible was crowded out of many so called Christian homes as well. Other literature, especially of the lighter type such as papers, magazines, and pictorial reviews, gradually took the place of the good old Book. In the extremely mechanized machine age of the twentieth century most people think they are too busy for serious reading. It would be contrary to human nature to expect the Swedish Baptists to prove an exception and thus escape the paralyzing spiritual influence of the age. To be sure, God did not forsake His people, but revivals became infrequent, superficial, and professional, and worldliness crept into the churches.

---

[2] Olof Bodien, *The Swedish Baptists of Minnesota,* (MS), p. 6.

[3] Andrew A. Stomberg, *A History of Sweden,* pp. 641–642.

[4] E. J. Nordlander, "Det Utmärkande i Våra Fäders Tro," *Svenska Standaret,* Oct. 10, 1922. See also Andrew Blomgren, "Lärotendenser," *Baneret,* Jubelnummer, 1902.

An encouraging trend relative to the place of the Bible has appeared among the Conference Baptists during the last twenty-five years. It indicates a healthy return to the Book, more particularly in relation to the training of young people. That training has assumed various forms and methods, such as Daily Vacation Bible Schools, young people's assemblies, and Bible camps for younger boys and girls. These agencies came in and supplemented the noble but insufficient ministry that the Sunday schools had always maintained. It is hardly an overstatement to say that this new movement of Christian education, a return to the Bible, has already begun to rejuvenate the entire denomination. Frequent conversions and additions to the churches, especially from the ranks of junior young people, an increased sense of solidarity and denominational loyalty, and generally a longing for a closer walk with God, are some of the tangible results of this back-to-the-Bible movement.

In regard to the main teachings of the Bible, it is a case for much gratitude that the Conference Baptists are still walking in the footsteps of their immigrant fathers. In their churches, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, the message of the great doctrines of sin and grace, of the necessity of the new birth and a sanctified life, and the second coming of Christ, is proclaimed to sympathetic congregations. The preachers of a generation ago may have been slightly at variance in their emphasis on God's election to salvation on the one hand and the human factor of free will on the other hand. At present the insoluable mystery in those two factors is generally recognized, waiting for the day when we shall no longer see in part but face to face. And thus Conference Baptists, like other evangelical Christians may say: "When we pray we are all Calvinists (that is, everything depends on God's sovereign power and grace), and when we preach we are all Arminians" (that is, it all depends upon man's response in free will).

A weakness, in the author's opinion, and a dangerous trend in theology among present day Christians, including our own fellowship, is the one-sided, superficial, and humanistic stress on ethics and the good life at the expense of the great doctrine of justification. To be sure, a child of God must never forget that the central factor in Christianity, the atonement and Christ's death in the sinner's place on Calvary's cross, must never become dissociated from the other great fact of Christ's work in the heart of a redeemed sinner. If the basis for ethics and the good life is human efforts alone, being in reality a salvation by works, then, indeed, it is a foundation of shifting sand. On the other hand, whenever the presenting of our bodies a living sacrifice, being transformed into a holy walk in the experience of the mature Christian, is based on "being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," then and then only will true Christian ethics and the good life in the Biblical sense be realized.

The doctrine of the glorious Second Coming of Christ has always been the great hope of the church, and has served as a most powerful incentive to a warm spiritual life. Anders Wiberg, the greatest of the three founders among the Swedish Baptists, was a firm believer in the final victory of the kingdom of God from the post-millennial point of view. That conception holds that the millennium, a thousand years of peace and righteousness upon the earth, will gradually be introduced by means of the preaching of the gospel. After the millennial period Christ will return and usher in the eternal kingdom. C. G. Lagergren, dean of the Theological Seminary for thirty-three years, who in his youth was profoundly influenced by Wiberg, followed in Wiberg's footsteps in his view of the Second Coming of Christ. However, the Swedish Baptists by and large embraced the pre-millennial faith, the theory that Christ will come before the millennium and will establish the Kingdom by means of His personal coming. At least two fundamental factors can be posited as guiding the thinking of the denomination into a pre-millennial direction. The first one was Editor Wingren, a pronounced pre-millennialist, who for some forty years very definitely moulded the faith and practice of Swedish Baptists. The second factor included some influential teachers at the theological seminary, such as J. A. Edgren, Eric Sandell, and Olof Hedeen.

In most of the main teachings of the Bible the Baptists agree essentially with other evangelical denominations. However, concerning ecclesiology, the doctrine of the church, the Baptists have always dared to differ with the traditions of world churches and adhere strictly to the New Testament pattern. For this, including the Baptists in Sweden, they have in many countries and at different times been cruelly persecuted and much maligned. Nevertheless, they have persisted in proclaiming the truth that a church, in the New Testament sense, must consist of born again and immersed persons only, and such as live a consecrated Christian life. The Swedish Baptist pioneers watched with diligent care lest the gate into the church might become wider than the gate into the Kingdom. Although it is true that God alone knows the human heart, nevertheless it is a fact that our forefathers very carefully investigated every prospective candidate for church membership to ascertain, if at all possible, whether he had experienced the new birth. They were trying to discover whether a changed daily life and walk had resulted from the professed conversion. The Church ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, too, were sacredly guarded. The New Testament order was followed: first, conversion; secondly, immersion; thirdly, church membership; and fourthly, breaking of bread, or the Lord's Supper.

TRENDS IN LIFE AND WORK

No doubt, it is a precarious thing to try to evaluate and compare the past and present in regard to spiritual life. For in the realm of the Spirit it certainly is true that "we know only in part." There is a tendency on the part of some to look on the past as the golden age, the good old days, when Christianity was vitally powerful and strong; and on the present age, on the other hand, as worldly, superficial, and spiritually anemic. Others, again, reverse this order.

In the realm of church work and Christian service there are, however, certain quite evident changes. The pioneer church was a pure democracy with the simplest structure of organization. The board of deacons and the board of trustees, functioning with more or less efficiency, depending largely upon pastoral leadership, as a rule never assumed any serious responsibility, especially in regard to the management of the affairs of the church. Everything, from the buying of a new broom to the discipline of wayward members, was introduced and discussed in the church business meeting without any previous preparation or recommendation. Sometimes the discussion was warm and animated and was prolonged for hours. But it was democracy, rule by the people, in real action. And somehow it seemed to work. If feelings occasionally were hurt, as a rule the heart was tender enough to ask for forgiveness and to forgive. That, indeed, is always a sure sign of a spiritually transformed life. The trend in recent years has drifted somewhat from the New Testament democracy to a republican or presbyterian form of church government. The tendency is to delegate increasingly more work and responsibilities to the various boards. As a result the membership as a whole is apt to lose interest. There is, no doubt, a middle way in church polity which should be constantly sought and prayerfully guarded.

Hardly any area of church life is more neglected today than is church discipline. In this the church reflects the spirit of the age. The breaking down of parental authority and the loss of respect for law and order and decency, both in low and high places, is one of the chief defects of the present age. And if not remedied, it is sure to bring chaos to human society. But the pioneer Baptists believed in and exercised a strict discipline in the church. In the case of immorality, for example, there was no attempt at white-washing sin. The name of Christ and of the church had been dishonored in the community, and the guilty one was immediately excluded from church fellowship. The work of restoration followed, with the result that the church was kept comparatively pure, and respected by all. It meant something to be a member of the church of the living God. The impure soul, instead of being white-washed, often returned with penitent tears to Calvary's cross and was washed white in the blood of the Lamb. Other sins, such as slander, covetousness, jealousy, pride, and a bitter and fault-finding spirit, were also dealt with as each case deserved. To be sure, discipline sometimes became too strict, one-sided and centered on non-essentials of life. A rigorous watch-care, however, was more conducive to a healthy spiritual life and to the promotion of a church endowed with a strong moral backbone, than the present day tendency to laxity or neglect of discipline for fear of hurting somebody's feelings, or of losing one's own popularity.

> As a substitute for the practice of exclusion, churches have preferred to "drop" names from the membership roll, a course of action which attaches to the delinquent no stigma of inquiry, charges, and trial. This practice may be viewed also as a tacit admission of the indifference to which the church is subjected by its nominal adherents.[5]

The problem of stewardship of time and money is another exceedingly interesting and important matter in the history of the Christian church. In the case of Swedish Baptists, the historian can quite easily discover three fairly distinct periods, especially relative to the stewardship of money. In the first place, the pioneer in all his poverty seemed to rejoice in sharing his meagre physical possessions with those in still greater need, as well as giving of his very limited means in order that the gospel story might be told everywhere. In meeting a stranger his first question usually was, "My friend, are you born again?" And the second question was, "Do you have anything to eat?" In the tradition of the Macedonian Christians "their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality."[6]

---

[5] Robert C. Torbet, *A History of the Baptists,* p. 468.

A second era followed when, in the wake of material prosperity, most Swedish Baptists, it seems, both of the first and second generation, failed to measure up to the high standard of sacrifice set by the founding fathers. Their giving was not commensurate with the increase in their wealth. The farmer had exchanged the sod house or the primitive log cabin for a commodious frame house, and the wage earner in the city had advanced from $1.50 a day to $10.00, or more, for less hours of work. But the Lord's share, if at all, was increased very little. One dollar a month to the church (to the priest — "prästen") had become a fixed rule for many when it should have been from ten to twenty-five times that amount. Under such conditions it became exceedingly difficult to do big things for the Lord.

Under an aggressive leadership in recent years, and much preaching and teaching, from the pulpit to Bible camp, the important matter of stewardship is gradually improving in the churches. Many Conference Baptists have been led into the most blessed experience of "tithes and offerings." And that makes a tremendous difference, both in the Lord's treasury and in the blessings that are enjoyed by the cheerful giver. For example, one brother, being a member in good standing in a Conference church, thought that his thirty dollars a year to the church represented generous giving. Then he was led to become a tither, and the next year his contributions rose to three hundred dollars. By reason of such increased giving on the part of not a few, it has become possible for the General Conference to expand its missionary program considerably both at home and abroad.

In varying degrees, the majority of Swedish Baptists have always been possessed with a sense of denominational loyalty. The pioneers, as recorded on several pages above, were anxious to reach the Swedes of America with the saving gospel. In the first twenty-five years that work was done largely by a few zealous preachers and by individual church members. The need, however, of combined efforts to win the lost for Christ led the churches, in 1879, to organize the General Conference. To be sure, it was a slow process, the matter of growing up and uniting and utilizing, at least in a small measure, the God-given potentialities of the Conference Baptist churches. It spanned a period of some sixty-six years, from 1879, when the General Conference was formed, to 1945, which marked the beginning of the Foreign Missions Advance. But each new venture of faith — home missions, philanthropic work, an independent publication department and a denominationally owned paper, a Conference owned and controlled school, work for children and young people in assemblies and Bible camps, united missionary efforts of women and men, and, as it were, the climax of many preceding achievements, the foreign missionary expansion — each one of these helped to make stronger "the ties that bind our hearts in Christian love." Denominational loyalty continued to grow and develop.

---

[6] 2 Cor. 8:2.

For a few years, however, that loyalty had to pass through a period of testing. For as the Swedish language gradually gave way to English as the church language, there were some, especially among the older members, who seriously doubted the possibility of maintaining for a longer time a separate existence as a General Conference. But it is a well known fact that the Conference Baptists now rejoice, as never before, in a fellowship of love and unity, as based upon an evangelical faith and a common and challenging missionary task. It is, no doubt, true that, more than any other two factors in achieving these results, it has pleased God to use the theological seminary and the denominational paper.

Evangelism

While it is undoubtedly true that revivalism is one of the creative factors in the American church as a whole,[7] so it is equally, or even more true, a fact that evangelism is that red strand that runs through the very existence of Swedish Baptists as a people. Without revivals and soul winning a Baptist church could not survive. The Bethel Seminary graduates, too, who by and large have constituted the majority of preachers throughout the years, have on the whole been fired with a passion for the lost which has led them to specialize in evangelism.

As previously recorded,[8] evangelism as such among Conference Baptists may conveniently be divided into three periods. The first period covered some fifty years, or up to the coming upon the scene of the blind evangelist A. J. Freeman in 1904. With few exceptions in that early period, the pastor and his consecrated people in the local church relied upon their own efforts, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to win

[7] W. W. Sweet, *The Story of Religions in America,* pp. 7, 8.
[8] Chapter Thirteen.

souls for Christ. Often it happened that during the Prayer Week, in answer to the humble and believing prayers of the saints, the churches experienced revivals which lasted all winter and brought scores of lost sinners to the Redeemer's cross. In the second period, beginning about the year 1904 and continuing for well nigh a quarter of a century, there arose among Swedish Baptists a group of unusually talented evangelists. Foremost among these was the blind evangelist Freeman, accompanied by his young daughter Esther. Their appealing song, powerful witnessing, and tactful personal work led to the conversion of hundreds and thousands in the Conference churches. Then there was the emotionally tender and kind P. G. Nelson, who could weep sinners into the Kingdom of God; and David Anderson who, with his strong Bible centered preaching, never failed to gain a response among saints and sinner. A third period of evangelism began around 1930. It was then mostly professional and non-Swedish Baptist evangelists who were engaged. The last few years many pastors and churches have returned, and with much blessing, to personal and house to house evangelism, which was also used by the Apostolic church, as well as by the pioneer Swedish Baptists. Child evangelism is also receiving increasing attention in local churches and in Daily Vacation Bible Schools and in Bible Camps, and boys and girls respond eagerly to the gospel invitation.

A special form of house to huse evangelism is "God's Invasion Army," started in the fall of 1948 under the direction of the General Conference evangelist Edward Nelson. An appeal had been made by the evangelist to young people in the churches to dedicate a certain portion of their time to direct soul winning. So generous was the response that something really extraordinary had to be done. A definite plan soon developed. Some thirty-five young people, on fire for the Lord and anxious to win the lost to Him, young men and women who had volunteered their service for one year, were selected. It was understood that their ministry would be without remuneration, except for food, lodging, and transportation. After six weeks of intensive training in the Bible and methods of soul winning, that enthusiastic company of young people, under the intriguing name "God's Invasion Army," began their work. With Edward Nelson as director, and Mr. and Mrs. Harold Lidbom as associate directors, they traveled from church to church within the General Conference areas, and both publicly and privately sought to lead souls to a new birth experience. Usually they would stay about one week in each place, either as a whole group, or distributing themselves in smaller companies to the neighboring churches.

The main emphasis was on house to house personal evangelism. It pleased the Lord to honor their faith and work to the conversion of many lost souls. In the beginning of 1952 the fourth "army" of about fifty young people went out on their soul winning conquest.

Moreover, for several years the Midwest Hebrew Mission, with headquarters in St. Paul, Minnesota, and with V. L. Peterson as founder and director, has carried on an extensive and fruitful work of evangelism among the Jews. Conference Baptists have responded generously in their support of this Mission.

CONTROVERSIES

In a world of thinking men and women, all differing from one another, it would be strange indeed if no controversies occurred. Although the consequences sometime may cause much heartache, confusion and division, it is true, on the other hand, that controversies in the Christian church often will clear the air and result in a more profound comprehension of important truths, and also, as in the case of Paul and Barnabas, lead to a wider diffusion of the gospel. A war is to be preferred to the peace of the cemetery. Controversies with other denominations, mostly in the early years, have been treated in Chapter Five. Debates and polemics within our own camp also occurred mostly in former generations, when convictions and beliefs, as it seems, were more vital and profound than at present. They were of two kinds, namely, theological and practical. The theological controveries centered mainly on two doctrines: the Atonement, and the teachings concerning the Holy Spirit and Sanctification.

The Doctrine of the Atonement

The first clash in regard to the doctrine of the Atonement, although of a local nature, became very tense, especially because it concerned primarily two outstanding leaders of the denomination, namely, the founder of the Theological Seminary, J. A. Edgren, and Pastor A. P. Ekman, a former disciple of Edgren's. The Seminary had been moved from St. Paul to Stromsburg, Nebraska in the fall of 1885 (See Chapter Eleven). Pastor Ekman was the beloved and successful pastor of the Swedish Baptist Church of that city, and both he and his church had gone to considerable sacrifice in order to prepare a home for the School.

After a few months and, suddenly, as it appears, the controversy broke loose. Undoubtedly however, there was a period of preparation leading up to the climax.

One chilly Sunday forenoon in November (1886) men kept their overcoats buttoned while the pastor delivered his sermon from Col. 1:24—"Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church."

At the close of the sermon Dr. Edgren rose from his seat, doffed his overcoat and made some pertinent remarks, taking issue with the pastor's interpretation. Then he invited anyone who wished to do so to come to the Seminary Hall and listen to a discourse on the Atonement. A goodly number accepted the invitation.[9]

The gauntlet had thereby been thrown down and ere long the controversy was on in full force. According to Edgren's interpretation, his pastor had embraced Waldenströmian views on the Atonement, which meant a one sided emphasis on the aspect of God's love in that important doctrine, to the neglect or the complete denial of God's holiness as the basic factor and reason why Christ died, according to Rom. 3:24-26. After a few weeks, fifty-two members, including faculty and students of the Seminary, asked for their letters, and organized a new church on March 7, 1887. A council was called for the purpose of recognizing the new congregation. This council was composed of leading pastors in the denomination: Editor Eric Wingren and Eric Sandell of Chicago, Frank Peterson of Minneapolis, L. J. Ahlstrom of Sioux City, Iowa, and A. F. Palm of a neighboring Baptist church in Nebraska. The council was unanimous in recognizing the new organization as a regular Baptist church. And after a conference with Ekman and the old church, the council also unanimously censured him for disseminating unsound teachings on the doctrine of the Atonement.

It is possible, after a careful sifting of the historical sources, to discover two different interpretations of the Stromsburg controversy. One is that, due to pressure from other faculty members, Edgren had become biased against Ekman and misunderstood his pastor's preaching on the Atonement, charging him with "the preaching of a bloodless atonement and a graceless justification," while all the time he tried to preach just the opposite. In a long letter to G. W. Northrup, dean of the Divinity School of the University of Chicago, Ekman himself expressed that opinion.[10] He relates how there were some members of the church who had misconstrued the so-called commercial theory of the Atonement to their own satisfaction in order to defend their own deficiencies in moral practices, while all the while they tried to rest in a false security that Christ had paid for every sin, regardless of how they lived. In order to correct such a state of affairs in the church and to help his ultra fundamentalist members to realize the importance of a holy walk and a consecrated life, Ekman declared that "the sacrificial death of Christ was not only a payment for the guilt of sin but also for the salvation from sin in the believer."[11]

---

[9] L. J. Ahlstrom, *A Biography of John Alexis Edgren,* pp. 149–157. See also several articles in *Nya Wecko-Posten* March 16, 1887, p. 4; April 13, 1887, p. 4; April 20, 1887; July 6, 1887; Sept. 21, 1887; April 18, 1888; July 4, 1888; Nov. 12, 1890.

[10] Letter by A. P. Ekman to G. W. Northrup, May 21, 1888, 24 pp.

The other interpretation is to the effect that Edgren had evaluated his pastor's beliefs correctly, and that Ekman, at least for the time being, had advocated unscriptural and unsound views on the doctrine of the Atonement. With this, as stated above, the council agreed. Ahlstrom asserted that after a year or so Ekman returned to the old faith.

> He took his treatment at the hands of his brethren bravely and remained calm. Nay, better than that; he allowed his bitter experience to act as a corrective to bring him back to a more thorough study of the Bible until he rested solidly on the old doctrine of the Atonement, as taught in our school. In less than a year we met and talked over our experiences when he said that he was convinced that the only theory that could be accepted as truly in harmony with the Bible was the substitutional doctrine of the Atonement.[12]

Whichever interpretation is the correct one, it is a fact that A. P. Ekman, ever after the sad experience at Stromsburg, in his long and successful life as pastor in New York and Tacoma, and as a trusted denominational leader, always proclaimed that sound view of the Atonement which had been taught by his teacher J. A. Edgren.

The second controversy concerning the doctrine of the Atonement became primarily a dispute between the two editors, Erik Sjostrand of "Svenska Standaret" and Eric Wingren of "Nya Wecko-Posten." It is doubtful that either the pastors or the church members were affected to any appreciable degree, excepting that their faith in sound doctrine was strengthened. The disputation began in the year 1914 and continued for some three years. Wingren had written some articles in "Nya-Wecko-Posten," his privately owned and controlled paper, in which he advocated the substitutionary theory of the Atonement. This interpretation, commonly considered the evangelical or orthodox view, implies that Christ died in our stead as a penalty and ransom price for our sins in order to satisfy God's holiness and thus make it possible for a just and loving God to pardon and save sinful men in a just and righteous way. That interpretation did not satisfy Sjostrand. He maintained that it was a Catholic doctrine, and he felt it his duty to teach both Editor Wingren and the Swedish Baptists a better way. And so, ere long the debate was in full swing in the two papers.[13] Dean Lagergren of the Theological Seminary, a theologian in his own right and a man who throughout his long life was always prepared to defend what he believed to be right both in theory and practice, entered the arena on Wingren's side. The final outcome of the polemics was, since Sjostrand refused to lay down the sword, that the General Conference felt constrained to accept the resignation of Editor Sjostrand.

---

[11] Ibid. See also C. R. Osbeck, *Svenska Baptisterna i Nebraska,* p. 37.

[12] Ahlstrom, op. cit., pp. 155–156.

Sjostrand's concept of the doctrine, although somewhat mystical and difficult to comprehend, would come close to the so-called representative theory of the Atonement. Briefly, it means that the sufferings of Christ were not substitutionary nor was God the object of the Atonement. But Christ became the great representative of God on the one hand and the human race on the other hand, coordinated with humanity in bearing the sins of the world. It was a sympathy suffering rather than a penalty suffering, and we all become sin bearers though not in the same degree as Christ. What He did was done on our behalf and for our benefit, and not in our stead.[14]

The Holy Spirit and Sanctification

The second main doctrine concerning which a controversy arose was the teaching in regard to the Holy Spirit and Sanctification. This polemic was considerably greater and much more intense than anything else that Swedish Baptists have ever experienced in their whole history. In fact, one could easily write a large volume based exclusively on the discussion which for several years was carried on in "Nya Wecko-Posten" concerning that most interesting subject. It developed into a movement with a Pentecostal emphasis, which, more or less, touched most of the churches within the entire General Conference fellowship.

The movement, known as "The New Movement" (Den nya rörelsen"), began, as far as Swedish Baptists are concerned, in the Second Swedish Baptist Church of Chicago. The pastor, J. W. Hjertstrom, wrote several articles in "Nya Wecko-Posten" during the early part of 1906, relating some remarkable answers to prayer. For about four years previous to that time many of the believers in the Second

[13] Numerous articles were written in both papers: *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Jan. 27, 1914; Sept. 29, 1914; Jan. 12, 1915; Jan. 26, Feb. 15, Dec. 7, 1915. *Svenska Standaret,* Oct. 28, 1914; Dec. 9, 1914; Jan. 11, Jan. 18, Jan. 25, Feb. 15, 1917.

[14] Erik Sjostrand, *Nytt Vin och Gamla Läglar,* pp. 6, 58, 139, 145.

Church had met every Monday evening to pray for the infilling of the Holy Spirit and to study the Word of God concerning the person and work of the Holy Spirit. In the month of February, 1906, there came the answer to the prayers of God's waiting children.[15] The Holy Spirit descended in power and filled to overflowing many of the believers. Sins were confessed, glorious deliverances from the power of sin were experienced, and jubilant testimonies of God's redeeming grace electrified the church. Several who had experienced, as it was usually called, the baptism in the Holy Spirit, spoke in new tongues. Hence the movement was often called "the tongues movement." It is significant, and not a coincidence, that the modern Pentecostal Movement,[16] which originated in Los Angeles, California, began about the same time.

What happened in the Second Church was noised abroad not only in Chicago but over the whole country. In fact, the Pentecostal Movement spread with unusual speed throughout the entire world. There were sincere Christians everywhere who were keenly conscious of defeat in their own lives, and of a lack of spiritual power and victory. Christianity had grown cold and luke-warm, and the teachings concerning the Spirit-filled life had been sadly neglected. The sincere souls found what they were seeking — victory through the Holy Spirit. The glorious fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22) followed as a natural result. Others who became enamored of the sensational in the movement were swept along and developed into destructive tares in the field of good wheat.

The climax as far as the Second Church and the Chicago area were concerned seemed to have been reached at the great meeting for the deepening of the spiritual life which was held February 11–14, 1909. Christian people from near and far attended that conference in the Second Church. The Spirit of God fell in great power upon the assembled multitude. Many sick were healed, sin sick souls found salvation, and the saints claimed the fulness of a surrendered life. This writer, who at that time was a young student in Bethel Academy, well remembers when the beloved principal, Arvid Gordh, returned from that meeting in Chicago. The students were keenly aware that something had happened to their leader. He came from the very presence of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. His face reflected heaven's sunshine. The effect upon the students and others was tremendous. The whole denomination felt the impact of the Spirit filled life of Arvid

---

[15] *Nya Wecko-Posten,* Feb. 6, 1906; Feb. 13, 1906; March 20, 1906.

[16] There have been several so-called Pentecostal or Tongues Movements, in the history of the church, the first one being in Asia Minor about the year 150, and was called "Montanism."

Gordh. Later on in the same year it was the author's joy to experience similar mercy drops in his own life.

Why then, should such a glorious experience become the subject of heated debates and divisions among the saints? The answer is not far to find. The enemy sowed tares among the wheat. Some of the people gloried in the experience of tongue speaking rather than in a continued walk with the Master in holiness, purity, love, and humility. The more excellent way of First Corinthians Thirteen was forgotten. As a result, a censorious spirit developed. Those who could speak with tongues laid down the rule, as they supposed Scriptural, that tongue speaking was the only true sign of having received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. All other Christians were carnal.

For about five years, 1905–1910, much was written in the denominational press on both sides to clarify the important teachings concerning the Spirit filled life. Admitting the fact of a "second blessing," "baptism in the Spirit," or whatever other name it was given, as a glorious experience in the life of a Christian, the more sane Bible students pointed out that no experience, of whatever kind must be allowed to obscure the great event of the new birth, the very starting point of the Christian life, when the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, moved in and took possession of the believer's heart. Nor must the clear New Testament teachings concerning repeated infillings of the Holy Spirit and sanctification as a growth and life long process be minimized.[17]

The outcome of the controversy and of the "new movement" as a whole was twofold. In the first place, there were some adherents of the movement who became too critical and fault finding of the local churches to feel at home there. They preferred to go out and join the Pentecostal fellowship. This happened, for instance, in a few places on the west coast. Undoubtedly it occurred in a few churches that some sincere souls, seeking the fulness of the Spirit, were practically driven out by a worldly membership and an unsympathetic leadership. That was especially true where the pastors assumed a critical attitude to the whole movement instead of preaching on the New Testament way of sanctification in a spirit of love.

Second, wherever the best in the "new movement" was retained, it brought much blessing to the churches. Pastors and members in general, in considerable numbers, began to search the Scriptures and read other literature dealing with the subject of the Holy Spirit and the Spirit filled life. Books by the saintly A. J. Gordon, such as "The Ministry of the Spirit," and the companion volume, "The Two-Fold Life," and many others of a similar nature, were eagerly read and helped many seeking souls to realize the blessings of a surrendered life.

---

[17] *Nya Wecko-Posten,* July 18, 1905; Jan. 16, 1906; May 8, 1907; Feb. 25, 1908; March 17, 1908; Feb. 23, 1909; March 9, 1905; March 16, 1905; Dec. 28, 1909. *Baneret,* Feb. 16, 1909, etc.

Discussions Concerning Practical Matters

With a sense of gratitude to God, and in a spirit of humility, it should be stated, that the Swedish Baptists successfully weathered the storm of doctrinal controveries. That was equally true of dissensions concerning practical matters. Of such there were primarily two which for a season pushed to the front in the history of the denomination.

One of them concerned the location of the Seminary, at the close of the Chicago period, which has been recorded in Ch. Twenty-three. The second one was the great debate, in the years 1919–1921, relative to "The New World Movement" among the Northern Baptists, and "the Inter-Church World Movement."

In the years immediately following World War I, when the American people were flushed with victory and money, many church leaders felt that the missionary program must be greatly accelerated in order "to make the world safe for democracy" and to usher in with power the Kingdom of God. To accomplish this purpose several of the larger denominations inaugurated movements bearing the significant titles of the New Era and the New World.[18] Those slogans were pretentious, indeed, and indicated that their authors actually believed that a new era in the history of mankind had been introduced. The Northern Baptist New World Movement was launched in Denver the year 1919. The aim was to raise a single budget to be divided among all the various missionary agencies of the Convention, including the schools. The goal was one hundred million dollars over a period of five years. The Movement was often referred to as "the one hundred million dollar drive." In the early stages of the Movement much optimism prevailed, and considerable sums were raised the first year.[19]

The Movement, however, had at least two inherent weaknesses. In the first place, it was a "drive," and Christians in general, and most certainly the people called Baptists, usually refuse to be driven either to the throne of grace or to place money on the altar of missions. The second weakness lay in the fact that the Movement was largely sponsored by the modernists in the Convention. The expressed purpose was to establish a Christian civilization in the world rather than to bring the lost to Christ. Such great fundamentalist leaders as W. B. Riley, and hundreds of others, definitely opposed the Movement because of its liberal tendencies. In view of a determined opposition, therefore, it was surprisingly strange that the "drive" succeeded as well as it did, namely, in reaching about one half of the goal.

---

[18] Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity,* Vol. VII, p. 60.

[19] Torbet, op. cit., pp. 408–409.

How did all that affect the Swedish Baptists? In order to rightly evaluate the situation, the historical background should be understood. The General Conference churches through the years, more or less, had maintained missionary cooperation with the American Baptists both on the state and national level. And the Northern Baptist leadership quite naturally looked forward to the time when the Swedish churches would be completely absorbed by the Convention. Moreover, a few of the Conference brethren were unable to see the possibility of a separate existence for the General Conference churches after Swedish had ceased to be used in the public services. However, the trend among Swedish Baptists, as has been recorded repeatedly in this volume, was increasingly, especially since the turn of the century, in the direction of independence and autonomy — home missions, publications, school, and foreign missions.

Into the midst of that kind of a background there came from the New World Movement a temptingly generous offer of one half million dollars, or a proportionate share, for the General Conference missionary work, provided the Swedish churches would take part in the "drive." On the surface that offer appeared too good to turn down. But then began a strenuous campaign, sometimes by means of high pressure methods, to line up the Swedish Baptist churches in favor of big money. However, the taint of a liberal theology in the New World Movement, and, on the other hand, the love of liberty and a strong evangelicalism in the General Conference fellowship, were factors which made controversy unavoidable. For at least two years an exceedingly interesting discussion concerning the big "Drive," for and against, was carried on in the denominational press.[20] The two "grand old men" of the denomination, Frank Peterson and C. G. Lagergren, lined up on opposite sides of the camp. As was to be expected, Frank Peterson, being in the employ of the Northern Baptist Convention, championed the cause of the New World Movement. And it was just as natural that Dean C. G. Lagergren, that staunch defender of the faith, would oppose the "Drive." It is a delight for the historian to record that the debate between the two men was always on a high plane and free of personal criticism. The two stalwart champions never suffered their differences of procedure in this particular matter to disturb their lifelong friendship.

---

[20] *Svenska Standaret,* Jan. 14, 1919; Jan. 21, 1919; Dec. 16, 1919; Dec. 23, 1919; Jan. 13, 1920; Jan. 20, 1920; Feb. 3, 1920; Feb. 17, 1920; March 2, 1920; March 9, 1920; March 23, 1920; April 6, 1920; May 11, 1920; Sept. 20, 1920; Sept. 14, 1920; and Oct. 20, 1920.

A few preachers and some laymen very definitely favored the "Drive." But by far the large majority of Swedish Baptists, including Editor Waldemar Skoglund of "Svenska Standaret," believed that more could be accomplished for the Kingdom of God if the Swedish Baptists continued, in an increased measure, to launch out in the direction of an independent work. The great achievements of the past twenty-five years more than justify that faith.

To make matters worse, as far as the New World Movement was concerned, was its connection with The Interchurch World Movement. That was a movement which came into being as a result of a meeting held in December, 1918. The postwar sentiment in behalf of church unity seemed to have been the underlying reason, and in nature it appears to have been quite identical with the recent creation of the World Council of Churches. The votaries of the Movement claimed that the grand purpose was not organic church union but only a friendly cooperation of all denominations in order to accelerate the process of christianizing the world. However, that was not so sure. For, according to headlines in the secular press, the Interchurch World Movement had decided to dissolve 30,000 smaller churches in America, and compel them to join larger churches, of whatever denomination, in their respective localities. The Movement was enthusiastically backed by John D. Rockefeller, Jr., who declared, "The Interchurch World Movement shall succeed." But the mighty millionaire was not almighty! In the words of K. S. Latourette, the greatest church historian of recent years, the Interchurch World Movement was a failure:

> Far from bringing added income to the proposed beneficiaries, the Interchurch World Movement collapsed, leaving a huge deficit in its expense account to be met by the cooperating denominations.[21] From this feverish effort with its grandoise dreams, a reaction began and the giving of churches to causes, whether domestic or foreign, outside the local parishes and communities fell off sharply, and that in spite of efforts of denominational officials to stem the retreat.[22]

[21] It is claimed by some that the Movement cost the Northern Baptists the enormous sum of two million dollars.

[22] Latourette, op. cit., p. 60.

CHURCH BUILDINGS

The home and the church were the first concern of the immigrants in the New World, whether the Pilgrims and Puritans in Massachusetts or the pioneers on the western frontier. Home building and church building are inseparable in the history of American pioneering. Love of home and fear of God went hand in hand.[23] However, words would fail to express the difference between the first unpretentious churches, such as the sod church at Arcadia, Nebraska, 16 feet by 20 feet, built in the early eighties, and the magnificent temple of the Trinity Church of New York City, erected 1931.

The early "meetinghouses," as they were usually called, were often made of rude logs, especially in the Northwest. The Scandia church, Minnesota, is a good example of a primitive and yet durable log meetinghouse, erected in the summer of 1857, the dimensions of the building being 26 by 20 feet. A coat of siding was put on in 1875. There in that meetinghouse, after ninety-five years, the descendants of the pioneers, in the third and fourth generation, still worship the God of their fathers, being loyal to the same evangelical faith.

Mostly, however, the pioneer meetinghouse was a simple rectangular-shaped frame building. In fact, it was a barnlike sort of structure, with four bare walls and a roof, and, of course, devoid of all architectural designs and attractions. The first consideration for the pioneer was to secure a place where he could worship God with fellow believers. It was usually only a one room affair, varying in size according to the needs of the particular church or field. Sometimes a vestibule was added later, and occasionally a room back of the platform to be used for the Sunday school. The furniture, too, conformed to the limited resources of the pioneer. Homemade rough benches, and the crudest of heating, if any heating at all, and lighting facilities equally crude, satisfied the needs of the pioneer. In the front of the building was a low platform with a pulpit in the center. As is well known, the Baptists, especially of the evangelical faith, with other denominations of the Reformed confession, place the pulpit in the center, thereby signifying their belief in the preaching of the Word as the essential part of the service. In ritualistic churches, on the other hand, the altar has pushed the pulpit to one side of the building.

In conformity with the plain meetinghouse, the service in the pioneer period was equally unadorned. Congregational singing was, as a rule, without any instrumental accompaniment. But who in that day thought an instrument necessary! Some brother in high pitch, another in low pitch would start the hymn. What was lacking in harmony, however, was made up in volume and devotion.[24] The important thing was to make a joyful noise to the Lord. The preaching by the early farmer preachers was of the rough and ready sort, strongly tinged with the old doctrines of sin and grace, heaven and hell. The sermon, sometimes two hours long, was eminently evangelistic, and was richly blessed of God to the conversion of the hearers. If none with ability to preach was present, the service would ordinarily take the form of a Bible discussion, prayer and testimony meeting. Or else one of the elders would read one of Spurgeon's sermons.

---

[23] C. G. Tideman, *A Brief History of the Scandia Swedish Baptist Church, 1855–1930*, p. 23.

With the coming of a trained ministry, the sermon was changed and improved, not in content but in arrangement, style, and delivery. The order of worship, although still free and unconventional, was lifted to a higher plane, and musical instruments and choir singing were introduced. The primitive meetinghouse, also, was gradually being replaced by the larger and the more modern house of worship.

Probably the First Church of Chicago was the first one in the whole denomination to erect a really large sanctuary made of brick, having a seating capacity of 1,000. It was located on Milton Avenue and Elm Street, and was dedicated for divine service in March, 1890. Unlike the older meetinghouse, it was built in such a way as to become serviceable for the growing Sunday school as well, having a number of smaller class rooms in the basement auditorium. In fact, it is safe to say that it marked a new epoch in church building among Swedish Baptists. On February 12, 1899, the Payne Avenue Church of St. Paul moved into its beautiful and spacious house of worship, with a seating capacity of about 1,000. The edifice was at that time considered the largest and the best in the denomination.

Since the turn of the century, marked progress has been made in church building, combining the two elements of service and beauty found in the garden of Eden. In pleasing architectural style, and serviceability for the Sunday school, since a new addition was erected, there are few churches that excel the Temple church of Duluth, built in 1910. The new church building in Waukegan, according to the opinion of some, represents the acme of beauty and practical arrangement.[25] The sanctuary of the Trinity Church, New York City, erected in 1931, is outstandingly different from all other Conference Baptist churches. In the words of David Guston, a former pastor:

---

[24] Ibid., p. 23.

[25] An excellent article by Virginia F. Matson on the new church in Waukegan occurs in *Youth Today,* April 29, 1951, pp. 3–5.

> Trinity Baptist Church of New York City is a unique church edifice. Of steel and brick construction on a modern plan, the building employs details from ancient Scandinavian architecture. Victor Hedmark, the gifted Swedish architect who designed it, sought to portray something of strength and beauty of an older culture, transplanted to a new environment. He succeeded in creating a truly impressive building.
>
> The square auditorium with a domed ceiling supported by slender columns and seating about 600 people gives an atmosphere of quiet, warm worshipfulness. Fine Swedish craftsmanship is evident to the careful observer; hammered iron, carved wood, stained glass windows and fresco art work. A monumental communion table and a carved pulpit are surmounted by a large baptistry and an impressive stained glass window depicting Christ preaching from the boat.[26]

LANGUAGE TRANSITION

For the early pioneers, many of whom had suffered severe persecution for their faith in the old country, it must have been with deep emotions of gratitude to the God of the nations that they landed on the hospitable shores of the New World. Here they were to find that which is most precious to a human being — religious liberty. And even more, they were to have an opportunity to worship God in their own mother tongue, to read the Bible in Swedish, to sing the old, familiar and precious hymns, and to tell the story of redeeming grace to their fellow countrymen in the same language.

Since man by nature is not only a social being but religious as well, it did not take long for the truly born again pioneer to discover the believers, whether they dwelt in the large city, on the boundless prairie or in the dense forests. Even if there were only two or three, they would start a prayer meeting, and before long a Sunday school, a ladies' mission circle, and finally a church. In the first decades of Swedish immigration the newcomers came mostly by families and in larger groups from the same province in Sweden, and transplanted themselves in America in distinct colonies, which bore all the distinguishing characteristics, including the language, of their particular province, whether Skåne, Småland, Dalarne, or Värmland. That was especially true of those who settled in the rural districts. Thus one could find whole communities, which for fifty years or more carried on all their commerce, social functions, and religious worship in their mother tongue.

---

[26] Notes by David Guston. See also *Dedication Services,* First Swedish Baptist Church, New York.

In justice to the Swedish pioneers, it should be remembered, however, that their object was not to build a little Sweden in America. On the contrary, they usually acquired a knowledge of the English language as quickly, or more so, as any other foreigners, and not only profoundly appreciated the privilege and the blessings they enjoyed in their adopted country but also whole-heartedly assumed their responsibilities as loyal citizens in Uncle Sam's land. Nevertheless, the early Swedish Baptists, in common with other foreign language church groups, were keenly aware of their great responsibility to evangelize their own countrymen, who came by the thousands every year to build homes in the New World. Hence, during the first fifty years, the language problem was really non-existent. As long as Swedish immigration continued in full force Swedish had to be used as a church language in order that the newcomers might be led to the experience of saving faith in the Son of God. In the local churches all the public services, including the Sunday school, with very few exceptions, were conducted in Swedish. The denominational papers also were published in Swedish, and that tongue was used as the medium of instruction in the Theological Seminary.

A second period was ushered in by the first decade of the present century. Gradually then, and often reluctantly, the churches had to become bi-lingual, which created in most places a rather difficult problem whose gradual solution extended over some thirty years, or more. So long as the immigrants and their children, who generally understood Swedish, constituted the bulk of the membership in the local churches, there was no need of introducing the English language into the public services. From 1903, however, when some 46,000 Swedes arrived in America, the stream of immigrants from Sweden was slowly reduced to a mere trickle.[27] Other fields for converts had to be explored. And they were not far to seek. There were the children of the second generation, the grandchildren of the pioneers. They understood Swedish but poorly, or not at all, but were receptive to the gospel message in a language which they understood. Moreover, in practically every community there were people of a non-Swedish origin who gladly responded to the type of evangelical message proclaimed by Swedish Baptist preachers.

But the road of language transition was beset by many obstacles. In the first place, the Theological Seminary, in its Morgan Park period, seemed to be tardy in discerning the signs of the times. Hence, with a

[27] Paul D. Anderson, *A History of Publications That Have Served the Swedish Baptist General Conference of America,* 1950, p. 48.

very limited preparation in the English language, or none at all, many of the preachers in the first and second decade of the present century, found it exceedingly difficult to cope with the situation. Very few were able to preach acceptably in English. To the credit of the older pastors it should be stated, however, that in spite of such handicaps they succeeded unusually well. The grace of God enabled them, even in the use of a strange tongue, to reach saints and sinners with the gospel of love.

Secondly, due to an innate human inertia, and probably pure selfishness on the part of some older members, the language transition proved an exceedingly painful experience. The Swedish language had become a part of themselves and their religious faith. "Some of them actually believed that there was no salvation except through the medium of Swedish."[28] No wonder, then, that controversy arose, at least in a few churches. Some insisted on retaining the Swedish language in public services indefinitely; others felt that English should be adopted immediately and "in toto;" while others wisely suggested that the language transition should neither be hastened nor retarded but be allowed to follow a natural course of development as the circumstances and conditions in each church might require. In the third place, and to make matters more critical, a few members, sometimes socially influential, became impatient with the slow pace of language transition and found it more profitable to affiliate with American State Convention churches.

On the whole, there was surprisingly little controversy in the denominational press concerning the language problem. Editor Waldemar Skoglund of "Svenska Standaret," in 1923, expressed himself in favor of more Swedish in the main church services in order to win for Christ the great number of immigrants who were coming especially to the large cities. Since the churches failed in their mission in that respect, the newcomers largely affiliated with non-religious lodges and Swedish societies.[29] In the same issue of "Standaret," another writer pleaded the case of the young poeple and others who could not understand Swedish. In his church, one of the largest in the whole denomination, he stated there were held at that time 24 regular services a year in English, and 144 regular services in Swedish, eighty-six percent of the services in the Swedish tongue. The writer also stated that about three per cent of the membership did not understand English, whereas twenty two per cent were unable to understand Swedish, and seventy five per cent understood equally well either language. His conclusion was that in order to serve three per cent of the membership eighty six per cent of Swedish was used.[30]

---

[28] George M. Stephenson, *The Religious Aspect of Swedish Immigration,* p. 458.

[29] *Svenska Standaret,* Nov. 2, 1923.

The historical development of the language transition, covering about thirty to forty years in the whole denomination, can be recorded quite briefly. In some rural churches and churches located in the smaller towns, with no current Swedish immigration, the transition to English occurred earlier than in the large city churches. Thus, the Scandia church, the oldest Conference Baptist church in Minnesota with an unbroken history, began to hold the English language Sunday evening services about the turn of the century. About a dozen years later the language transition in all church services was peacefully completed in Scandia. In Cambridge, Minnesota, Bennet Erickson, who was proficient in both languages, introduced in 1904, the year he began his ministry there, the English language to be used every other Sunday evening service.[31] A couple of years later all Sunday evening services were held in English. It is safe to say, however, that by 1910 only a bare handful of congregations had even begun in a small way to use the English language.

But it was in the second decade, in the period of World War I, that the language transition received a strong momentum. Much superficial and sham patriotism paraded up and down the country, which, in its frenzy of iconoclasm, tore down the altars to the foreign gods. The use of any foreign language, especially in public, was considered pro-German, pro-enemy, and exceedingly unpatriotic. The German and Scandinavian languages suffered most, and were removed from the curricula of many schools and colleges. Church groups, including the Swedish Baptists, feared to be branded as unpatriotic, and speeded up, as much as was humanly possible, the process of language transition. Naturally, however, the Swedish language was too deep-rooted to be suppressed in one day or one year. For another decade, at least, the churches had to struggle with the handicap of a bi-lingual medium in spreading the gospel. It was a most trying period for all foreign speaking groups, and not quite satisfactory even under the best and wisest arrangement, for either the Swedish or English elements in the churches.

Finally, however, in the early part of the fourth decade the language problem found its only natural and reasonable solution. English, the language of the country, prevailed, and thereby, also, the Swedish Baptists were granted a vastly expanded opportunity for service in the

---

[30] *Svenska Standaret,* Nov. 2, 1923, p. 4.

[31] *Fyrtio År,* En Minnesskrift, Cambridge, Minn., 1888–1928, p. 21.

Kingdom of God. So long as the Swedish language was used exclusively, they were limited in their gospel work to Swedes only. Now, with the language barrier removed, the entire population in any particular field became accessible to the message of salvation. The word "Swedish" in the official name of local churches was removed, and in 1945 "The Swedish Baptist General Conference of America" became "The Baptist General Conference of America." In popular language the fellowship as such is known as "Conference Baptists" to distinguish them from other Baptist bodies in America.

The official publications of the Swedish Baptists followed, by and large, in their language transition, the pattern of the local churches. As early as 1914 single articles and poems in English began to appear in "Svenska Standaret." In 1917, at the beginning of W. Skoglund's regime as editor, the language transition began to take a definite pattern. That pattern took the shape of a "Young People's Department" in English, on the third page of "Standaret." For two years Swan Engwall, then a Chicago pastor, edited that department, succeeded by J. O. Backlund in 1919, and by C. George Ericson in 1923.[32] The culmination point of language transition as far as "Svenska Standaret" was concerned, was attained in 1940. In September of that year "Standaret," having been merged with "The Baptist Evangel," was changed from a Swedish to an English language paper under the new name "The Standard." A four page Swedish supplement was included, optional to the subscribers.[33] A few years earlier, in 1933, the General Conference Annual, with its minutes and reports, was published for the first time in English.

In the Theological Seminary, too, the transition was a gradual one. With the merging of Bethel Academy and the Seminary in 1914, the theological students received a fairly adequate training in English in the preparatory department. In 1916 a few courses in the Seminary began to be conducted in English. The number of such courses was increased from year to year down to 1930, when the period of language transition in the Seminary terminated.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF CONFERENCE BAPTISTS

In the early part of this volume it was recorded that the Swedish Baptists, though a comparatively small group, constitute a part of that larger fellowship of Baptists whose membership include some fourteen million souls in the United States. However, it may even seem presumptuous to speak about any particular contribution on the part of a people so limited both in resources and numbers as the Conference Baptists. For in membership they never exceeded fifty thousand, and they cannot boast of any prominent political leaders nor of any men with eminent social prestige or of big business. They have, however, the distinction of being a part of that large and influential section known as the middle class, which constitutes the very backbone of American society. It is also members of that middle class of people that make up the majority of the American churches. As members of that class of people, it is safe to state that the Conference Baptists, since their very beginning one hundred years ago, have represented the best and the noblest in the life and culture of the nation, and have contributed their humble share toward the building of a strong America.

---

[32] Paul Anderson, op. cit., pp. 54–57.

[33] Ibid., p. 61.

It is, however, within the area of the Spirit, and not in tangible material things, where the Swedish Baptists have made their greatest contributions. Admittedly it is difficult to analyze spiritual values, and yet it seems possible to discern a few distinct, creating and controlling factors, which have operated down through the years.

In the first place, the Swedish Baptists of America, as descendants of the "läsare" people of Sweden, have made the Bible the only and supreme authority in faith and practice. Since they have believed implicitly that the Bible is the infallible Word of God, a beacon light upon the dark sea of life, guiding the pilgrims into the safe harbor, they have also been desperately concerned throughout their whole history about giving that Book to others. In this the Swedish Baptists have carried on in the tradition of the Pilgrim fathers who brought the Bible with them to the wilderness of the New World. America was founded on the Bible and will continue to be strong only so long as its people, from the cottage to the White House, will order their lives according to the precepts of Sacred Scriptures. Into whatever city, or hamlet, or rural community in America Swedish Baptists have gone, there they have planted the Word of God. Its message has gone forth in unadulterated form from the home and the pulpit, from devoted Sunday school teachers and consecrated church members in all walks of life.

In the second place, another important contribution is the fact that Swedish Baptists in their religious propaganda have always aimed higher than the making of mere church members. The great doctrine of the new birth has received a central emphasis in all their teaching. "My friend, are you born again?" was the constantly repeated question of the pioneer Swedish Baptist to every stranger he chanced to meet;

and down through the years the descendants of the pioneers have continued to raise the same question from the pulpit and the pew. For man, even in the twentieth century with all its boasted culture, still has the same deceitful and desperately wicked heart, and needs a meeting with the Prince of Peace. Supernatural regeneration is the solution. To tell little children, and men and women, of the Savior, what a glorious contribution that is!

In the third place, Swedish Baptists have been characterized not only by an intense devotion to the Sacred Scriptures and a desire to proclaim the good news of salvation everywhere, but they have also been possessed of a firm conviction of the absolute necessity of a holy walk and a life separated from the sinful ways of the world. Orthodoxy in doctrine has not been divorced, with due allowance for the frailties of human nature, from the ethics of the New Testament. In consequence, a manhood and womanhood have been developed which has been in marked contrast to that often seen round about them. It has generally been conceded that a Swedish Baptist community was of a high moral order. The people of such a community, "whatever their weakness may have been, were a light that could not be hid, an influence not easily definable but ever present as an irresistable power toward higher ideals of life."[34]

In the fourth place, Swedish Baptists have endeavored faithfully to carry out the Master's great commission, "Go ye therefore and make disciples among all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19). Their sons and daughters, in great numbers, have gone to the ends of the earth to point the lost to the Lamb of God. In soul winning passion they have been wise Kingdom builders, and a large harvest of souls has crowned their labor.

In conclusion, the Bible at the center as the eternally sure and dependable Word of God, the message of redeeming grace and deliverance from the guilt and power of sin by means of the new birth, the glorious possibility of a consecrated and Spirit filled life, and the privilege and responsibility to tell the story of Jesus to all nations — these are the four red strands that run clear through the history of Swedish Baptists of America during the course of "A Century of God's Grace!" May a merciful and kind God lead His people to greater victories in coming years.

"Soli Deo Gloria!"

---

[34] Carl G. Tideman, *A Brief History of the Scandia Swedish Baptist Church,* 1855–1930, pp. 36–37.

HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS

1844 Captain Gustavus W. Schroeder was baptized in New York, Nov. 3.

1847 F. O. Nilsson baptized in the river Elbe, Hamburg, Germany, Aug. 1.

1848 The first Baptist Church in Sweden organized with six members, Sept. 21, at Frillesås.

1849 F. O. Nilsson ordained at Hamburg, Germany, May 6.

1850 F. O. Nilsson sentenced to exile from Sweden, April 26.

1852 Gustaf Palmquist baptized June 27, at Galesburg, Ill.

1852 Anders Wiberg baptized by F. O. Nilsson, July 23, at Copenhagen, Denmark.

1852 Palmquist baptized three believers in the Mississippi River, at Rock Island, Ill., Aug. 8, and five days later, August 13, these three formed the first Swedish Baptist church in America.

1853 The exiled F. O. Nilsson, together with a company of twenty-one Baptists from Sweden, came to America in June.

1853 Village Creek (Lansing Center), Iowa, at present the oldest Conference church, organized Aug. 10.

1853 Swedish Baptist church organized at Houston, Minn., Aug. 18.

1854 Oldest Swedish Baptist church building in the world erected at New Sweden, Iowa.

1855 Scandia church was organized Aug. 1.

1856 First conference of Swedish Baptists anywhere in the world organized at Rock Island, Ill., June 20–25.

1857 Gustaf Palmquist returned to Sweden.

1858 The Minnesota Conference organized at Scandia, Sept. 20–21.

1858 John Alexis Edgren baptized by Ira R. Stewart in the Mariners' Baptist Church, New York, April 29.

1860 The exiled F. O. Nilsson returned to Sweden and received his pardon from King Carl XV, Dec. 11.

1862 Carl Gustaf Lagergren, at the age of sixteen, was baptized in Sweden, Aug. 24.

1864 Olaus Okerson, "the break-plow" missionary in Minnesota and the Pacific Northwest, came to America.

1864 The Illinois-Iowa Conference organized of five churches and 187 members.

1866 Olof Lindh, pioneer preacher, came to the United States.

1866 First Swedish Baptist Church of Chicago, (now Addison Street), organized Aug. 19.

1867 Gustaf Palmquist died in Sweden Sept. 18, at the age of fifty-five.

1867 The First Swedish Baptist Church (Trinity) of New York organized Dec. 22.

1868 Andrew Blomgren, commonly called by his friends "Minnesota's Philosopher," came to America.

1868 John Ongman, a militant preacher and organizer, emigrated to the United States.

1869 Not less than six new churches organized: Trade Lake and Wood River in Wisconsin; Oakland, Nebraska; Big Springs, South Dakota; Forest City and Meriden, Iowa.

1871 Captain John Alexis Edgren started the Theological Seminary in Chicago, with one student, Christopher Silene.

1871 In May Edgren began to publish Zions Wäktare (The Watchman of Zion). This marks the beginning of a denominational press.

1871 First Swedish Baptist Church (Bethlehem), Minneapolis, Minnesota, organized June 24.

1872 Western Iowa-Nebraska Conference organized in July at Oakland, Nebr.

1873 First Swedish Baptist Church (Payne Avenue), St. Paul, Minn., organized in May.

1876 Swedish Baptist Church (Bethany), Moline, Ill., organized.

1877 August Johnson, "the Kansas Apostle," began his unique work in Kansas.

1879 Organization of the Swedish Baptist General Conference of America, June 12–14, at Village Creek, Iowa. John Ongman, moderator; A. P. Ekman, recording secretary; J. A. Edgren, preacher of conference sermon.

1880 Eric Wingren arrived in Chicago and took over from Edgren the responsibilities of "Evangelisk Tidskrift" (Evangelical Journal).

1880 Christopher Silene became the first missionary of the General Conference.

1881 Death of F. O. Nilsson, Oct. 21, at Houston, Minn.

1881 Frank Peterson became pastor of the First Swedish Baptist Church (Bethlehem), Minneapolis.

1883 Three conferences organized: Swedish Baptist Conference of the Eastern States (now the Mid-Atlantic Conference) Feb. 11, at New Haven, Conn.; Iowa Conference, June 29–30, at Des Moines; and Nebraska Conference, at Oakland, in June.

1883 A Scandinavian Baptist Church was formed in Seattle, June 3, the first on the west coast.

1884 Not less than fifteen new churches were organized, covering the whole country from Brooklyn to San Diego.

1884 Three state conferences organized: Missouri Conference; Michigan Conference, at Ishpeming; (in 1893 this Conference was divided into the Upper and Lower Michigan Conferences); Wisconsin Conference at Ogema.

1884 Edgren's Theological Seminary moved from Chicago to St. Paul under the name "The Swedish American Bible Seminary."

1885 Eric Wingren changed the name of his semi-monthly paper "Evangelisk Tidskrift" (Evangelical Journal) to "Nya Wecko-Posten (The New Weekly Mail). This paper he continued to publish and edit until 1918.

1886 The Seminary moved in February to Stromsburg, Nebr., where it remained two years. Its new name was "The Central Bible Seminary."

1887 Due to failing health, J. A. Edgren terminated his work as dean of the Theological Seminary.

1888 Johanna Anderson, St. Cloud, Minn., the first Swedish Baptist foreign missionary, sailed for Burma.

1888 The Seminary returned to Morgan Park, Chicago, and became a separate Swedish department of the Baptist Union Theological Seminary, with Eric Sandell as acting dean.

1889 Carl Gustaf Lagergren came to America and began his service of thirty-three years as dean of the Theological Seminary.

1889 The Washington Conference was organized. It became the Columbia Conference in 1930.

1890 The Ola Hansons began their nearly forty years of outstanding labor in Burma. He reduced the Kachin language to writing and translated the entire Bible into that tongue.

1890 Frank Peterson resigned as pastor of the First Swedish Baptist Church of Minneapolis to become District Secretary of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society.

1890 John Ongman resigned as pastor of the First Swedish Baptist Church of St. Paul and returned to Sweden.

1891 Erika Bergman left for South India.

1893 O. L. Swanson and his wife began their forty-three years of missionary service in Assam, India. Swanson became known as "the Billy Sunday of Assam."

1893 The first state Women's Union was organized in Washington, in June.

1893 The Illinois Young People's Union organized in June.

1893 Olof Bodien began his nineteen years' ministry as pastor of the First Swedish Baptist Church (Bethlehem) of Minneapolis.

1896 Olof Hedeen, pastor of the Brooklyn Swedish Baptist Church, began his teaching ministry of eighteen years at the Theological Seminary, Morgan Park, Ill.

1898 The Historical Committee, first appointed in 1892, was revitalized at the Conference held at Oakland, Neb.

1899 The California Conference was organized at San Francisco, June 19.

1899 The New England Conference was formed, July 29, at Worcester, Mass.

1900 The General Conference was legally incorporated Dec. 12 under the law of the state of Illinois.

1900 Nicholas Hayland, the first graduate of Edgren's Theological Seminary, passed away, Feb. 14, at Tacoma, Wash.

1901 The pioneer missionary Olaus Okerson, of Minnesota and the Pacific Northwest, died Aug. 29, at McMinnville, Ore.

1902 The Fiftieth Jubilee Celebration of the Swedish Baptists was held in the Immanuel Baptist Church (American), Chicago, Sept. 25–28. About 1,000 delegates were registered. J. A. Edgren was the guest of honor. The denomination then had 324 churches with a combined membership of 21,769.

1903 J. E. Klingberg began his Children's Home, May 20, at New Britain, Conn.

1905 Fridhem, Home of Rest, Chicago, officially opened.

1905 Bethel Academy, with Arvid Gordh as its first principal, began operation Oct. 2, in the Elim Baptist Church, Minneapolis.

1905 Adelphia College, Emanuel Schmidt president, opened its doors in October in Seattle, Wash.

1905 Fred Palmborg commenced his work, July 1, as first general missionary in Western Canada.

1906 In the early part of the year a revival started in the Second Swedish Baptist Church (Grace) of Chicago, which became known as the "Nya Rörelsen" (The New Movement). It was a modified Pentecostal movement with emphasis on the Spirit filled life, and soon spread to other areas of the country.

1906 Mounds Park Hospital was started, the first patient being admitted Jan. 7, 1907.

1906 Organization of the Scandinavian Conference, Alberta, Canada.

1907 G. Arvid Hagstrom began his three years of service as the first Mission Secretary of the General Conference, Jan. 1.

1907 Elim Park Home of Rest, Shelton, Conn., was dedicated June 24.

1907 Sunset Home, Concordia, Kansas, began operation in the fall.

1907 Organization of the Central Conference, Canada.

1907 Reorganization of the Minnesota Young People's Union. The first Union was formed in St. Paul, 1894.

1907 "Ungdoms-Stjärnan" (The Young People's Star), forerunner to "Svenska Standaret," began publication in Nov. Erik Sjostrand was the editor and publisher.

1908 J. A. Edgren, founder of the Theological Seminary and of the denominational press, died at Oakland, Calif., Jan. 26.

1909 In Nebraska, on June 7, an independent foreign mission society was formed. This became the herald of independent General Conference foreign missions later on.

1909 The beginning of the publishing ministry and the book store of the General Conference, Chicago, Dec. 1.

1911 "Svenska Baptist Standaret," later "Svenska Standaret," and, in 1940, "The Standard" was started, with Erik Sjostrand as editor.

1911 Emil Friborg began his thirty-two years' ministry as pastor of the First Swedish Baptist Church (Central), Seattle, Wash.

1912 The Theological Seminary ceased as a department of the Divinity School of the University of Chicago.

1912 Arvid Gordh resigned as principal of Bethel Academy, and A. J. Wingblade was elected to fill the vacancy.

1912 Olof Bodien passed away March 19.

1914 The Theological Seminary moved, for the second time, from Chicago to St. Paul, and was merged with Bethel Academy under the name "Bethel Academy and Theological Seminary," later changed to "Bethel Institute," and recently to "Bethel College and Seminary." The year 1914 marked the beginning of a General Conference owned and operated school work. G. Arvid Hagstrom was elected president of the combined schools, C. G. Lagergren remained dean of the Seminary and A. J. Wingblade principal of the Academy.

1914 G. Theofil Wickman went out as an independent missionary to Spain. This mission became a definite link in the chain of developments that led to autonomous Conference Baptist foreign missions.

1914 Captain G. W. Schroeder, in a sense the first Swedish Baptist, died in Brooklyn, New York, March 2, nearly ninety three years of age.

1916 Organization of "Bethel Institute Kvinnoförbund" (Women's Federation) under the leadership of Mrs. Olof Bodien.

1917 The Swedish Baptist Foreign Mission Committee, later Society, was organized in Chicago. It became a clearing house for Wickman's mission in Spain, and later also for the Russian mission.

1917 Waldemar Skoglund became editor of "Svenska Standaret."

1918 "Nya Wecko-Posten" was purchased by the General Conference and merged with "Svenska Standaret." The first issue of the combined paper came off the press Feb. 17.

1918 The Laymen's Movement got under way, the primary object of which was to help raise the money necessary to wipe out the indebtedness resting on Bethel Institute and on the Publication Department.

1918 Eric Sandell, for twenty years teacher in the Theological Seminary, passed away Feb. 12.

1918 J. O. Backlund began his twenty seven years of service at Baptist Conference Press, first as Business Manager of Conference Press and associate editor of "Svenska Standaret," and later editor in chief, financial secretary of the General Conference, etc.

1919 A five-year New World Movement undertaken by the Northern Baptist Convention.

1919 Founding of the Verdugo Old People's Home, Los Angeles, Calif.

1921 Olof Hedeen began his work as Mission Secretary of the General Conference.

1921 Fiftieth Jubilee Celebration of the Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.

1922 C. G. Lagergren retired as dean of the Theological Seminary, and Arvid Gordh was elected to fill the vacancy. Karl J. Karlson was elected teacher in the Seminary the same year.

1922 Two great Swedish Baptist leaders passed away: Eric Wingren, editor of "Nya Wecko-Posten," and Eric Rosen, for fourteen years pastor of the Emerald Avenue Baptist Church, Chicago, and successful promoter of denominational philanthropy.

1923 C. Geo. Ericson assumed his duties as associate editor of "Svenska Standaret" and later editor of Youth Publications; in 1940 he became Business Manager of Baptist Conference Press.

1923 On April 15 the work of the Chicago Foreign Mission Society was transferred to the General Conference. This marked the beginning of General Conference foreign missions.

1924 Beginning of the Bethany Beach Summer Assembly by the Chicago Young People's Union.

1925 The Minnesota Young People's Assembly started, the first one being held on the Bethel campus, St. Paul.

1925 K. J. Karlson succeeded Arvid Gordh as dean of the Theological Seminary.

1926 The Young People's Commission was created, to function under the General Conference Committee on Missions.

1927 Swedish Baptist Diamond Jubilee Celebration held at the Moody Memorial Church, Chicago, Aug. 25–28. Frank Peterson and C. G. Lagergren, the two "grand old men" of the denomination, served as honorary chairmen and delivered the two main addresses. At that time the General Conference fellowship was composed of 333 churches, with a combined membership of 33,830. The registered delegates numbered 2,225.

1929 The decease of two prominent missionary leaders: Frank Peterson, July 30, for nearly forty years District Secretary of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society; and Ola Hanson, October 17, for thirty-nine years missionary to the Kachins, Burma.

1931 The Bethel Junior College launched, with Walfred Danielson as its first dean.

1931 "The Baptist Evangel," an English language paper primarily for young people, was started.

1931 Sidney B. Nelson was added to the staff of the publication department.

1932 Edna and Reuben Holm sailed for Assam, India, supported by the Swedish Baptist young people.

1932 The Women's Commission created, functioning under the General Conference Committee on Missions.

1933 The June Rose project, now the Canadian Mission Rose, was inaugurated by the Women's Commission. The proceeds have been used for mission work in Canada.

1935 R. A. Arlander became Mission Secretary of the General Conference.

1935 The Penny-a-Meal plan was begun by the Women's Commission. The proceeds have been used for the support of Bethel College and Seminary.

1936 Emery A. Johnson became dean of the Bethel Junior College.

1938 Wyman Malmsten began his work as promotional secretary of Bethel College and Seminary.

1940 "Svenska Standaret" and "The Baptist Evangel" were combined into one weekly Sept. 3, under the name "The Standard."

1940 Arvid Gordh passed away Jan. 4. He had been principal of Bethel Academy seven years, and teacher in the Seminary eighteen years.

1941 G. Arvid Hagstrom retired as president of Bethel College and Seminary after twenty-seven years. He was succeeded by Henry C. Wingblade.

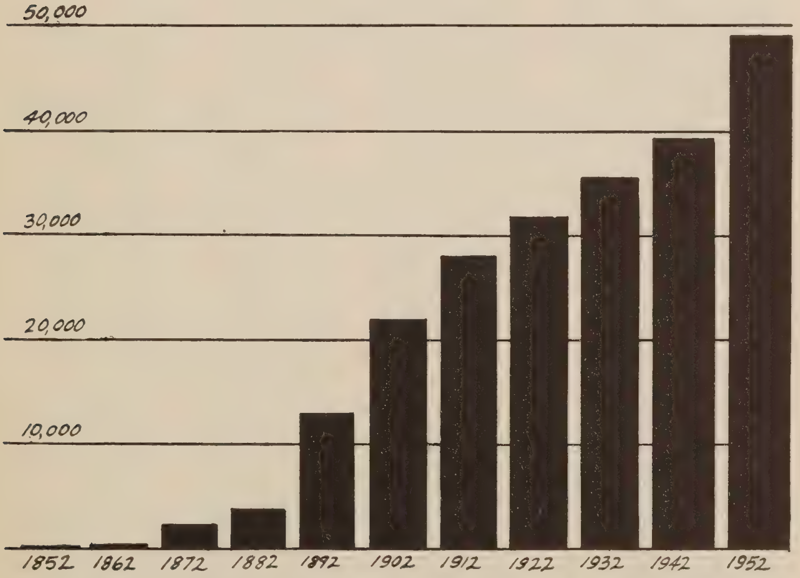
1941 C. G. Lagergren, for thirty-three years dean of the Theological Seminary, died Oct. 27, at the age of ninety-five years.

1943 William C. Tapper became the first director of Bible School and Young People's Work of the General Conference.

1944 Foreign Mission Advance launched, with Walfred Danielson as the Mission Secretary and Sten Lindberg of China as the first Advance missionary.

1945 William Turnwall succeeded R. A. Arlander as Home Mission Secretary.

1945 Martin Erikson succeeded J. O. Backlund as editor in chief of "The Standard."
1945 C. E. Carlson was elected dean of the Junior College.
1946 Diamond Jubilee Celebration of the Theological Seminary, St. Paul. A 75-Year History was published.
1947 Bethel Senior College was launched.
1948 The National Brotherhood was organized with Ewald Chalberg as its first president.
1948 Edwin Omark succeeded K. J. Karlson as dean of the Theological Seminary.
1948 Val E. Hauck became youth director, A. J. Bergfalk associate secretary of the foreign mission board, and David Olson editor of Sunday school papers.
1949 Robert Klingberg took charge of the accounting department at the Chicago headquarters.
1949 God's Invasion Army was begun, with Edward Nelson as leader.
1950 A Conference Youth Fellowship was organized.
1951 Leonard Webster succeeded J. Leonard Carroll as secretary of Bible School and Young People's department.
1951 Completion of new headquarters building at 5750 N. Ashland Avenue, Chicago.
1952 The Centennial, at St. Paul, Minn., June 26–29.



Membership Growth of the Baptist General Conference of America 1852–1952

Historical Table

Showing year and place of annual meetings of the General Conference, also moderator, secretary, and preacher of the annual sermon.

Year	Place	Moderator	Secretary	Preacher
1879	Village Creek, Ia.	John Ongman	A. P. Ekman	J. A. Edgren
1880	Moline, Ill.	John Ongman	E. Wingren	E. Wingren
1881	Council Bluffs, Ia.	John Ongman	E. Wingren	John Anderson
1882	Minneapolis, Minn., 1st.	John Levin	C. A. Sandvall	J. M. Flodin
1883	Chicago, Ill., 1st.	John Anderson	L. J. Ahlstrom	Frank Peterson
1884	Minneapolis, Minn., 1st.	John Anderson	L. J. Ahlstrom	John Ongman
1885	Chicago, Ill., 1st.	A. P. Ekman	Axel Tjernlund	C. Silene
1886	Stromsburg, Neb.	Nils Olson	K. S. Swedberg	L. J. Ahlstrom
1887	Moline, Ill.	Nils Olson	J. M. Shulene	A. P. Hanson
1888	Chicago, Ill., 1st.	L. J. Ahlstrom	K. A. Ostergren	C. A. Sandvall
1889	Kansas City, Mo.	Frank Peterson	K. A. Ostergren	A. O. Engblom
1890	Rockford, Ill.	Axel Tjernlund	K. Ostlund	A. P. Hanson
1891	Minneapolis, Minn., 1st.	N. N. Morten	J. P. Berlin	L. Arlander
1892	Oakland, Neb.	O. J. Engstrand	A. P. Sword	O. P. Peterson
1893	Chicago, Ill., 1st.	A. P. Ekman	K. Ostlund	J. W. Hjertstrom
1894	St. Paul, Minn., 1st.	C. G. Lagergren	K. Newquist	Eric Rosen
1895	Chicago, Ill., 2nd.	O. Bodien	M. Larson	O. Bodien
1896	Omaha, Neb.	P. A. Hjelm	E. J. Nordlander	O. P. Peterson
1897	Minneapolis, Minn., 1st.	P. A. Hjelm	E. J. Nordlander	Petrus Swartz
1898	Oakland, Neb.	C. G. Lagergren	E. J. Nordlander	G. Lundquist
1899	Big Springs, S. Dak.	O. P. Peterson	M. Carlson	E. Sandell
1900	St. Paul, Minn., 1st.	C. Silene	E. S. Lindblad	D. Lofstrom
1901	New York, N. Y.	O. J. Engstrand	J. E. Klingberg	N. N. Morten
1902	Chicago, Ill., 1st.	O. Bodien	M. R. Rosenlund	O. P. Peterson
1903	Stromsburg, Neb.	L. Arlander	E. S. Lindblad	Axel Tjernlund
1904	Kansas City, Mo.	G. Arvid Hagstrom	R. A. Arlander	L. Johanson
1905	Seattle, Wash.	C. G. Lagergren	Paul Hallin	C. Silene
1906	Chicago, Ill., Englewood	Magnus Larson	Erik Sjostrand	O. J. Engstrand
1907	Boston, Mass.	T. Clafford	Hj. Henrickson	G. Arvid Hagstrom
1908	St. Paul, Minn., 1st.	E. J. Nordlander	J. D. Nylin	J. Alfr. Erikson
1909	Manistique, Mich.	Arvid Gordh	J. O. Backlund	J. P. Sundstrom
1910	Rockford, Ill.	G. Arvid Hagstrom	C. R. Osbeck	Swaney Nelson
1911	Kiron, Iowa	G. Arvid Hagstrom	P. Ryden	Carl A. Anderson
1912	Chicago, Ill., 1st.	O. J. Engstrand	J. O. Backlund	V. E. Hedberg
1913	Duluth, Minn., 1st.	G. Arvid Hagstrom	H. Litorin	Emil Friborg
1914	St. Paul, Minn., 1st.	E. J. Nordlander	P. Ryden	E. J. Nordlander
1915	Oakland, Cal.	Prof. O. Hedeen	J. O. Backlund	C. O. Dahlen
1916	Chicago, Ill., 2nd.	Prof. O. Hedeen	J. O. Backlund	G. Arvid Gordh
1917	Minneapolis, Minn., 1st.	Prof. O. Hedeen	J. O. Backlund	Eric Carlson
1918	Minneapolis, Minn., Elim	Carl Vingren	J. O. Backlund	C. Th. Brodin
1919	Valley, Neb.	John E. Spann	J. O. Backlund	N. C. Parsons
1920	Worcester, Mass.	Robt. Earl	J. O. Backlund	F. C. Hamlin
1921	St. Paul, Minn.	Arvid Gordh	J. O. Backlund	C. G. Lagergren
1922	Chicago, Ill., Englewood	C. G. Lagergren	J. O. Backlund	Frank Peterson
1923	Chicago, Ill., 1st.	Eric Carlson	J. O. Backlund	Axel Lindgren
1924	Bridgeport, Conn., 1st.	G. Arvid Hagstrom	J. O. Backlund	Eric Scherstrom
1925	Seattle, Wash., 1st.	J. E. Klingberg	J. O. Backlund	Carl A. Antonson
1926	Kansas City, Mo.	Emil Friborg	J. O. Backlund	Bennet Erickson
1927	Chicago, Ill., 1st.	K. J. Karlson	J. O. Backlund	R. A. Arlander
1928	Jamestown, N. Y.	V. E. Hedberg	J. O. Backlund	S. J. Peterson
1929	Portland, Ore., 1st.	J. O. Backlund	Swan A. Engwall	Arvid Edstam
1930	St. Paul, Minn., 1st.	J. Alf. Erikson	J. O. Backlund	E. N. Lindholm
1931	Minneapolis, Minn., 1st.	R. A. Arlander	J. O. Backlund	J. O. Backlund
1932	Chicago, Englewood	Swaney Nelson	J. O. Backlund	K. J. Karlson
1933	Chicago, Austin	F. C. Hamlin	J. O. Backlund	Joseph A. Carlson
1934	Chicago, Ill., 1st.	A. E. Sjolund	J. O. Backlund	J. G. Johnson
1935	Duluth, Minn., Temple	Eric N. Lindholm	J. O. Backlund	Jacob Peterson
1936	Minneapolis, Minn., Elim	E. E. Hall	J. O. Backlund	E. E. Eklof
1937	Los Angeles, Cal.	J. G. Johnson	C. R. Osbeck	A. B. Colvin
1938	Wilmington, Del.	G. Arvid Hagstrom	C. R. Osbeck	O. Milton Lind
1939	Cambridge, Minn.	Linus Johnson	J. O. Backlund	Reuben Olson
1940	Rockford, Ill.	Eric N. Lindholm	J. O. Backlund	Anton E. Sjolund
1941	Brockton, Mass.	E. J. Omark	J. O. Backlund	E. E. Hall
1942	Chicago, Emerald Ave.	Swan A. Engwall	J. O. Backlund	Wm. Turnwall
1943	St. Paul, Payne Ave.	Board meeting		
1944	St. Paul, Bethel Institute	Oscar E. Ostling	J. O. Backlund	Bengt Anderson
1945	Duluth, Minn.	H. W. Malmsten	J. O. Backlund	Donald G. Peterson
1946	St. Paul, Bethel Col.-Sem.	H. C. Wingblade	J. O. Backlund	K. J. Karlson
1947	Seattle, Wash.	W. F. Widen	J. O. Backlund	Marvin Samuelson
1948	Muskegon, Mich.	Victor Larson	J. O. Backlund	A. C. Conrad
1949	Omaha, Neb.	L. W. Dahlquist	Robert Klingberg	O. B. Anderson
1950	Worcester, Mass.	L. E. Thompson	Robert Klingberg	Ralph C. Nelson
1951	Oakland, Calif.	Robert Klingberg	Walfred Johnson	Carl H. Lundquist

BIBLIOGRAPHY

This bibliography is not exhaustive in the field of the Swedish Baptist History of America, but includes only sources referred to in the preparation of this history. Considerable more material is available in the archives of the Historical Society of the Baptist General Conference of America, at Bethel Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota.

BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS

Ahlstrom, L. J., Femtiofem År i Västra Wisconsin. Historiska Skildringar, Minneapolis, 1924.

———, Eighty Years of Swedish Baptist Work in Iowa, 1853–1933. Des Moines.

———, John Alexis Edgren, Soldier, Educator, Author, Journalist. Chicago, 1938.

Alexandria, Sixty Years History. First Baptist Church, Alexandria, Minnesota, 1881–1941

American Swedish Baptists in Missionary Service, New York, 1937. Pamphlet published by the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society.

Anders, John Olson, The Origin and History of Swedish Religious Organizations in Minnesota, 1853–1885. Rock Island, 1932.

Anderson, M. F., The Baptists in Sweden. Philadelphia, 1861.

Arthur, Sixty Years of History. The Arthur Baptist Church, Arthur, Iowa, 1885–1945.

Armitage, Thomas A., A History of the Baptists. New York, 1889.

Ashland, A Brief History of the Salem Baptist Church, Ashland, Wisconsin, 1890–1940.

Backlund, J. O., et al. Eds. Jubileumsboken, Chicago, 1927.

———, Swedish Baptists in America. Chicago, 1933.

———, A Pioneer Trio. F. O. Nilsson, Gustaf Palmquist, and Anders Wiberg. Leaders in the first decade of Swedish American Baptists. Chicago, 1942.

Bellingham, Historik. Tjugofem År. Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Bellingham, Washington, 1890–1915.

Benson, P., Svenska Baptisternas Historia i Washington och Norra Idaho. Seattle, 1911.

———, Begynnelsetider av Svenska Baptisternas Verksamhet på Västkusten. Seattle, 1911.

Berwyn, Fifty Years of Service. Oak Park Avenue Baptist Church, Berwyn, Illinois, 1895–1945.

Boston, Minnesblad Efter Fyrtio År. Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Boston, Massachusetts, 1875–1915.

———, Femtioårs-Jubileums Minnesbok. Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Boston, 1875–1925.

Bridgeport, Femtioårsberättelse. Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Bridgeport, Connecticut, 1882–1932.

Brockton, Tjugofem Års Berättelse. Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Brockton, Massachusetts, 1883–1908.

Brooklyn, Tjugofem Års Minne. Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Brooklyn, New York, 1883–1908.

Bystrom, J., En Frikyrklig Banbrytare. F. O. Nilssons Liv och Verksamhet Stockholm, 1910.

———, and Friden, George, En Folkväckelsens Apostle. Eric Ericson-Rosen. Hans Liv och Verksamhet, 1843–1922. Stockholm, 1947.

Cadillac, Sixtieth Anniversary History of the Temple Hill Baptist Church, Cadillac, Michigan, 1883–1943.

Cambridge, Fyrtio År. En Minnesskrift över Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Cambridge, Minnesota, 1888–1928.

———, Fifty Years. First Baptist Church, Cambridge, 1888–1938.

Chanute, Historik. Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Chanute, Kansas.

———, Fifty Years History of the Grant Avenue Baptist Church, Chanute, Kansas, 1869–1919.

Chicago, Tjugofem Års Berättelse. Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Chicago, 1866–1891.

———, Historik. Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Chicago, 1866–1906.

———, Diamond Jubilee History. First Swedish Baptist Church, Chicago, 1866–1941.

———, Tjugofem Års Berättelse. Andra Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Chicago, 1874–1899.

———, Femtio-Års Jubileum. Andra Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Chicago, 1874–1924.

———, Seventy-fifth Anniversary. Grace Baptist Church, Chicago, 1874–1949.

———, Tjugofem Års Historia. Fjärde Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Chicago, 1882–1907.

———, Tjugofemårs Historia. Englewood Svenska Baptistförsamling, Chicago, 1885–1910.

———, History of Emerald Avenue Baptist Church, Chicago, 1885–1945.

———, Twenty-five Year Survey, Elim, Chicago, February, 1924.

———, Fiftieth Anniversary History. Elim Baptist Church, Chicago, 1899–1949.

———, Fyrtio År. Lake View Svenska Baptistförsamling, Chicago, 1889–1929.

———, Fifty Years of Christian Service in Lake View, Chicago 1889–1939.

———, Fifty Years History. Central Avenue Baptist Church, Chicago, 1891–1941.

———, Year Book. Humboldt Park Swedish Baptist Church, Chicago, 1904.

———, Edgewater Svenska Baptistförsamlings Femton Års Jubileum, 1909–1924.

———, Tjugo Års Jubileum. Edgewater Svenska Baptistförsamling, Chicago, Församlings Härolden, April, 1929.

Christian, John T., A History of the Baptists, 2 vols. Nashville, Tennessee, 1922.

Cokato, Seventy Years. A History of the Swedish Baptist Church, Cokato, Minnesota, 1871–1941.

Columbia, The Golden Jubilee of the Columbia Swedish Baptist Conference, 1889–1939.

Conant, William C., Revival Incidents. New York, 1858.

Concordia, Fifty Years of Baptist Work in Concordia, Kansas, 1877–1927.

Conference, Minutes of Early Conferences, 1864, 1870, 1878, 1881, and 1882.

Davenport, Sixtieth Anniversary History. Grand Avenue Baptist Church, Davenport, Iowa, 1889–1949.

Denver, Fiftieth Anniversary History. Immanuel Baptist Church, Denver, Colorado, 1886–1936.

Des Moines, Historical Sketch. Penn Avenue Baptist Church, Des Moines, Iowa, 1881–1931.

Duluth, Minnesskrift. Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Duluth, Minnesota, 1884–1924.

———, Temple Baptist Church Golden Jubilee, 1884–1934.

———, Sixtieth Anniversary History. Temple Baptist Church, Duluth, 1944.

———, Fiftieth Anniversary. Bethel Baptist Church, Duluth, 1890–1940.

———, The Book of Memories. Bethany Baptist Church, Duluth, 1892–1942.

Edgren, J. A., Minnen från Havet, Kriget och Missionsfältet. Chicago, 1878.

Ekman, A. P., Historik. Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, New York, 1867–1900.

Ekman, E. J., Inre Missionens Historia. Stockholm, 1896.

Elim Park, Historik, 1907–1910, Shelton, Connecticut.

Elim Park, Vilo-och Ålderdomshem, Shelton, 1925.

Ellison, O., Svenska Baptisternas i Wisconsin Missions Historia, 1901.

Evanston, Historik. Tjugofem År, Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Evanston, Illinois, 1886–1911.

———, Fiftieth Anniversary History, Calvary Baptist Church, Evanston, Illinois, 1886–1936.

Foreign Missions Summary, September 1950, Chicago. Foreign Missions Advance.

Galesburg, Fifty Years History. North Chambers Street Baptist Church, Galesburg, Illinois, 1888–1938.

Garrison, W. E., The March of Faith, New York, 1933.

Glover, R. H., The Progress of World Wide Missions. Chicago, 1924.

Grantsburg, Golden Jubilee History of the Swedish Baptist Conference of Wisconsin, and of the Baptist Church, Grantsburg, Wisconsin, 1884–1934.

Grove City, Femtioårs Jubileumsskrift. Svenska Baptistförsamlingen Grove City, Minnesota, 1866–1916.

Hall, A. G., Svenska Baptisternas Historia. 2 Vols. Chicago, 1900.

Hartford, Fiftieth Anniversary, Swedish Baptist Church, Hartford, Connecticut, 1888–1938.

Hordville, Fiftieth Anniversary Souvenir Bulletin. Baptist Church, Hordville, Nebraska, 1878–1928.

Iron Mountain, A Historical Sketch. Fifty Years, Immanuel Baptist Church, Iron Mountain, Michigan, 1880–1930.

Iron River, Sixtieth Anniversary History. First Baptist Church, Iron River, Michigan, 1889–1949.

Jamestown, Minnesskrift. Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Jamestown, New York, 1884–1914.

Johnson, Eric and Peterson, C. F., Svenskarne i Illinois. Historiska Anteckningar. Chicago, 1880.

Joliet, A Review of the Swedish Baptist Church, Joliet, Illinois, 1881–1931.

Kansas City, A Review of the History of Fifty Years. First Swedish Baptist Church, Kansas City, Missouri, 1872–1922.

Kenosha, Anniversary Number, Tabernacle Messenger, Swedish Baptist Church, Kenosha, Wisconsin, 1904–1929.

Kingsburg, Historik. Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Kingsburg, California, 1901–1926.

Kiron, Seventy-fifth Anniversary History of the Swedish Baptist Church, Kiron, Iowa, 1868–1943.

———, History of the First Pioneers of Kiron, by C. J. Johnson.

Klingberg, Irene and Robert, J. E. Klingberg, Adventurer in Faith. A Biography. Chicago, 1948.

Klingberg, J. E., Litteraturhistoriska Studier. New Britain, Connecticut, 1932.

———, A Brief History of the Swedish Baptist New York Conference, 1883–1933.

———, The Children's Home. 30th Anniversary, New Britain, Connecticut, 1903–1933.

Lagergren, C. G. Efter Sjuttio År, 1852–1922. Svenska Baptiströrelsens Uppkomst och Utveckling i Amerika. St. Paul, 1922.

———, Från Strids-och Arbetsfältet. Minnen och Iakttagelser från en Sextiofemårig, Verksamhet, 1862–1927. St. Paul, 1927.

Lake Norden, Fiftieth Anniversary. Swedish Baptist Church, Lake Norden, South Dakota, 1888–1938.

Latourette, K. S. A History of the Expansion of Christianity, 7 vols. Harper & Brothers, New York, 1945.

Lawdahl, N. S., De Danske Baptisters Historie i Amerika, Morgan Park, Illinois, 1909.

Lindberg, Alfred E., The Blind Swedish Evangel, Biography of A. J. Freeman, Chicago, 1917.

Lindh, O., Minnen och Iakttagelser från en Förfluten Levnad, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1907.

Lindsborg, A History of the First Swedish Baptist Church, Lindsborg, Kansas, 1880–1940.

Los Angeles, Minnesblad. Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Los Angeles, California, 1887–1912.

———, Fifty Years in Retrospect. First Swedish Baptist Church, Los Angeles, California, 1887–1937.

Lovene, P. History of the Swedish Baptist Churches of Kansas and Missouri, 1869–1927.

Ludington. Our Golden Jubilee. Washington Avenue Baptist Church, Ludington, Michigan, 1877–1927.

Magnuson, John. John Ongman. En Levnadsteckning. Örebro, 1932.

Manistee, Historical Sketch of the First Baptist Church, Manistee, Michitee, Michigan, 1872–1942.

Manistique, Tjugo Års Jubileumsskrift. Skandinaviska Baptistförsamlingen, Manistique, Michigan, 1885–1905.

———, Sixtieth Anniversary History. Bethel Baptist Church, Manistique, Michigan, 1885–1945.

McKeesport, Historik. Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, McKeesport, Pennsylvania, 1884–1909.

———, Golden Jubilee History. Swedish Baptist Church, McKeesport, Pennsylvania, 1884–1934.

Meriden, Historik. Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Meriden, Connecticut, 1887–1907.

Minneapolis, History of the First Swedish Baptist Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1871–1921.

———, History of the Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1871–1946.

———, Minnesteckning. Elim Svenska Baptistförsamlingens Tjugofemåriga Verksamhet, Minneapolis, 1888–1913.

———, Fiftieth Anniversary History of the Elim Baptist Church, Minneapolis, 1888–1938.

———, Tjugofemårsminnen. Bethel Baptistförsamlingen, Minneapolis, 1896–1921.

Minnesskrift av den Graduerande Klassen, Chicago, 1914. Prepared by the last graduating class of the Theological Seminary, Morgan Park, Illinois.

Moline, Historik. Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Moline, Illinois, 1876–1901.

Monmouth, Fiftieth Anniversary. Immanuel Baptist Church, Monmouth, Illinois, 1888–1938.

Montgomery, Helen Barrett, Following the Sunrise. Philadelphia, 1913.

Mosher, R. C., The Baptists in History. Albert Lea, Minnesota, 1900.

Muncy Jr., W. L. A History of Evangelism in the United States. Kansas City, 1945.

Muskegon, The Sixtieth Anniversary History of the Lakeside Baptist Church, Muskegon, Michigan, 1881–1941.

Nelson, O. N., History of the Scandinavians and Successful Scandinavians in the United States, 2 vols. Minneapolis, 1893.

Newark, Tjugofemårsberättelse. Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Newark, New Jersey, 1901–1926.

New England, Svenska Baptisternas i New England 25 Års Jubileumsskrift, 1899–1924.

———, A Brief History of the Swedish Baptist Conference of New England, 1899–1939.

New Haven, Kort Historik. Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, New Haven, Connecticut, 1882–1907.

New Sweden, Fyrtio-Års Historik över Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, New Sweden, Maine, 1871–1911.

New Sweden, Seventieth Anniversary History. First Swedish Baptist Church, New Sweden, Maine, 1871–1941.

New York, Minnesskrift, Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen i New York, 1867–1917.

Nordstrom, N. J., Svenska Baptistsamfundets Historia, 2 vols. Stockholm, 1923.

———, En Kulturbild från 1800-talets Religiösa Brytningstid, Stockholm, 1926.

———, Betelseminariet. Historik, Stockholm, 1941.

Norelius E., De Svenska Luterska Församlingarnas och Svenskarnas Historia i Amerika. Rock Island, 1890.

North Dakota, Svenska Baptisternas i Norra Dakota Konferens, 1912.

Norway, A Forty Year History of Baptist Work in Norway, Michigan, 1888–1928.

Oakland, Historik. Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Oakland, California, 1885–1905.

Oakland, Fifty Golden Years. First Baptist Church, Oakland, Nebraska, 1869–1919.

Olson, Adolf and Virgil, Seventy-five Years. A History of Bethel Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota, 1871–1946. Chicago, 1946.

Olson, Ernest, in collaboration with Anders Schön and Martin J. Engberg, History of the Swedes in Illinois. Chicago, 1908.

Omaha, Historical Sketch of the Second Swedish Baptist Church, South Omaha, Nebraska, 1896–1930.

Osbeck, C. R. Minnesalbum. Svenska Baptisterna i Nebraska, 1869–1919.

Palmquist, Per, En Korsets Härold. Gustaf Palmquists Lif. Stockholm, 1889.

Pacific, The Swedish Baptist Pacific Home. Social Study. Los Angeles, 1942.

———, The Swedish Baptist Pacific Home, Los Angeles, 1919–1929.

Peterson, Frank, Historical Record. The Central Bible Seminary, Stromsburg, Nebraska, 1886.

———, Early Days on the Minnesota Prairie. Minneapolis, 1914.

———, Femtio År. En Återblick. A Brief Survey of Swedish Baptist History, 1852–1902. Minneapolis, 1903.

———, Life of Frank Peterson. Autobiography with additions by G. Arvid Hagstrom. Chicago, 1929.

Portland, Minnesskrift. Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Portland, Oregon, 1884–1924.

Portland, Sixtieth Anniversary of the Temple Baptist Church, Portland, Oregon, 1884–1944.

Preston, Fifty Years. Preston Baptist Church, Washington, 1900–1950.

Providence, Kort Historik. Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Providence, Rhode Island, 1885–1910.

Quincy, Tjugofemårs Berättelse. Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Quincy, Massachusetts, 1885–1910.

Rockford, Minnen i Ord och Bild. Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Rockford, Illinois, 1880–1905.

———, Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingens Femtio-Års Jubileum. Rockford, Illinois, 1880–1930.

Ryden, En Dalason. Levnadsteckning över Pastor Olof Bodien. Chicago, 1914.

———, Minnen från Banbrytaretiden. Cambridge, 1915.

———, Svenska Baptisternas i Minnesota Historia från 1850–talet till 1918. Minneapolis, 1918.

Saint Paul, Minnesteckning. Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingens i St. Paul Fyrtioåriga Verksamhet, 1873–1913.

———, A Memorial Sketch of the First Swedish Baptist Church, St. Paul, Minnesota, 1873–1923.

———, Victory Anniversary. 70 Years of Service, Payne Avenue Baptist Church, St. Paul, 1873–1943.

———, The Golden Record. A Fifty Years History of the Central Baptist Church, St. Paul, 1893–1943.

———, History of the Bethany Swedish Baptist Church, St. Paul, 1905–1930.

San Francisco, Kort Historik. Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, 1889–1899.

———, Tjugofem-Års Berättelse. Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, San Francisco, California, 1889–1914.

———, Fortieth Anniversary History. Swedish Baptist Church, San Francisco, 1889–1929.

Scandia, A Brief History of the Scandia Swedish Baptist Church, Waconia, Minnesota, 1855–1930.

Scherstrom, Eric, ed. Från Skärgårds-och Sjömansliv till en Märkesplats i Herrens Vingård. Eric Sandells Liv och Verksamhet. Chicago, 1918.

———, Fridhem. A Brief History of a Noble Work, 1905–1930. Chicago.

Schmidt, Emanuel, Svenska Baptisternas i Amerika Teologiska Seminarium, 1871–1921. Chicago, 1921.

———, Svenska Baptisterna på 1700-talet. Chicago.

Schroeder, Gustavus G., History of Swedish Baptists in Sweden and America. New York, 1898.

Schuck, Henry, and Warburg, Carl, Svensk Litteraturhistoria, 2 vols. Stockholm, 1890.

Seaquist, Carl J., History of the Platte Valley Baptist Conference, 1872–1947. Gothenburg, Nebraska, 1947.

Seattle, The Golden Jubilee. First Swedish Baptist Church, Seattle, Washington, 1889–1939.

———, Through Fifty Years of Service. Ballard Baptist Church, Seattle, 1893–1943.

———, Thirty-fifth Anniversary. Elim Baptist Church, Seattle, 1910–1945.

———, Fifth Anniversary. Baptist Rest Home, Seattle, 1950.

Sioux City, Golden Jubilee History. The Swedish Baptist Church, Sioux City, Iowa, 1874–1924.

———, Seventy-fifth Anniversary History. Central Baptist Church, Sioux City, Iowa, 1874–1949.

Sioux Falls, Historical Sketch. Central Baptist Church, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, 1883–1933.

Sisell, A., En Missionärs Anteckningar och Upplevelser på Red Riverdalens Fält. Chicago, 1926.

Sister Bay, Fifty Years History of the Baptist Church, Sister Bay, Wisconsin, 1877–1927.

Sjostrand, Erik, Nytt Vin och Gamla Läglar. Chicago, 1917.

Skarstedt, Ernest, Svensk-Amerikanska Folket i Helg och Söcken. Stockholm, 1917.

Små Ax från Guds Åkerfält, Stockholm, 1886.

South Dakota, A History of Swedish Baptists in South Dakota, 1868–1936.

Spokane, Golden Jubilee History. Broadway Baptist Church, Spokane, Washington, 1894-1944.

Stadling, Jonas, Anders Wibergs Liv och Verksamhet. Stockholm, 1889. Andra Genomsedda och Tillökade Upplagan, 1916.

Stanchfield, Minnesteckning. Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Stanchfield, Minnesota, 1866–1916.

———, Diamond Jubilee History of the Swedish Baptist Church, Stanchfield, Minnesota, 1866–1941.

Stephenson, George M., The Religious Aspect of Swedish Immigration. A Study of Immigration Churches. University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1932.

———, A History of American Immigration, 1820–1924. Boston, 1926.

Stomberg, Andrew A., A History of Sweden, New York, 1931.

Strandburg, Trettiofem-Års Jubileum. Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Strandburg, South Dakota, 1882–1917.

Stratford, Jubilee History of the Swedish Baptist Church, Stratford, Iowa, 1856–1931.

Stromsburg, Fifty-fifth Anniversary History. First Baptist Church, Stromsburg, Nebraska, 1873–1928.

Sun Prairie, Trettioårs Minne. Sun Prairie Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Sun Prairie, South Dakota, 1883–1913.

Swanson, O. L., In Villages and Tea Gardens. Chicago, 1944.

Sweet, W. W., The Story of Religions in America. Harper & Brothers, New York, 1930.

Tacoma, Historik. Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Tacoma, Washington, 1893–1918.

Tacoma, Golden Jubilee. Central Baptist Church, Tacoma, Washington, 1893–1943.

Thompson, C. L., A History of American Revivals. Rockford, 1878.

Topeka, Golden Jubilee History. West Side Baptist Church, Topeka, Kansas, 1881–1931.

Torbet, Robert G., A History of the Baptists. The Judson Press, Philadelphia, 1950.

Trade Lake, Diamond Jubilee History of the Trade Lake Baptist Church, Trade Lake, Wisconsin, 1869–1944.

Vedder, H. C., A Short History of the Baptists. New and Illustrated Edition. Philadelphia, 1907.

———, A Short History of Baptist Missions. Philadelphia, 1927.

Waterbury, Minnesskrift. Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Waterbury, Connecticut, 1892–1917.

Waukegan, Fifty Years of Christian Service. Immanuel Baptist Church, Waukegan, Illinois, 1895–1945.

Westin, Gunnar, Ur den Svenska Folkväckelsens Historia och Tankevärld. Brev från och till den Svenska Baptismens Banbrytare, 1850–1855. Första och Andra Delen. Stockholm, 1933–1934.

———, George Scott och hans Verksamhet i Sverige, Stockholm, 1929.

White, Charles L., A Century of Faith. Philadelphia, 1932.

Wiles, Charles P. The Challenge of the Sunday School. Philadelphia, 1916.

Willmar, First Fifty Years. First Baptist Church, Willmar, Minnesota, 1875–1925.

Wilmington, Fifty Years History. First Swedish Baptist Church, Wilmington, Delaware, 1889–1939.

Wood River, Seventy-fifth Anniversary History of the Wood River Baptist Church, Grantsburg, Wisconsin, 1869–1944.

Worcester, Kort Historik. Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Worcester, Massachusetts, 1880–1900.

———, Fifty Years History of the First Swedish Baptist Church, Worcester, 1880–1930.

———, Svenska Baptistförsamlingens å Harlem Street 25-års Jubileum, Worcester, Massachusetts, 1896–1921.

———, Golden Jubilee History. Harlem Street Baptist Church, Worcester, 1896–1946.

Worthington, Fiftieth Anniversary History, Swedish Baptist Church, Worthington, Minnesota, 1873–1923.

Youngstown, Golden Jubilee History. Evangel Baptist Church, Youngstown, Ohio, 1890–1940.

OFFICIAL PUBLICATIONS

Advance. An Illustrated Annual of the Baptist General Conference of America, 1945–1951. Chicago.

Betlehem. Kristlig Kalender. Östersund, 1887.

Ebenezer. An Illustrated Annual of the Swedish Baptist General Conference of America, 1942–1944. Chicago.

Elim Park. Annual Report. Swedish Baptist Home of Rest, Elim Park, Shelton, Connecticut, 1949.

General Conference. Minutes of Early Conferences, 1864, 1870, 1871, 1881, 1882.

———, Årsbok för Svenska Baptistförsamlingarna inom Amerika, 1889–1931. Chicago.

———, Annual. Swedish Baptist Churches of America, vols. 1 and 2, 1931–1944. Chicago.

———, Annual. Baptist General Conference of America, 1944–1952. Chicago.

Illinois. Årsbok. Svenska Baptisternas i Illinois Söndagsskolförening, 1893–1898. Chicago.

———, Årsbok. Svenska Baptisterna i Illinois, 1899–1933. Chicago.

———, Annual. The Illinois Swedish Baptists, 1934–1941. Chicago.

Julgåvan. Kristlig Kalender för 1893. Utgiven av O. Hedeen och E. Schmidt, New York.

Midvinterboken. Edited by J. O. Backlund, 1920–1922. Chicago.

Minnesota. Rapport och Statistik över Minnesota Konferensens Svenska Baptistförsamlingar, 1882–1883; 1886–1887.

———, Årsbok. Svenska Baptisternas i Minnesota Konferens, 1904–1932.

———, Annual. Swedish Baptist Conference of Minnesota, 1933–1951.

Minnesota. Minutes of Minnesota Baptist State Convention, 1859–1868.

New England. Årsbok. New England Konferensen, 1904–1929.

New York. Årsbok. Svenska Baptisternas i New York Konferens, 1921–1926.

Nya Wecko-Posten's Illustrated Kalender, 1904–1918. Chicago.

Swedish Finnish. Årsbok. Svenska Baptist Missionsföreningen i Amerika, 1915–1917.

ARTICLES

Asplund, Charles, Memorial Address delivered at the grave of Olaus Okerson, McMinville, Oregon, on the occasion of the One Hundredth Anniversary of Okerson's Birth, May 16, 1936.

Blomgren, Andrew, "Lärotendenser," Baneret Jubelnummer, 1902.

Carlson, C. E., Report on Swedish Baptist Work in Canada. Annual, Baptist General Conference of America, 1945–1946, Part 1, pp. 39–47.

Carlson, Gordon, "The Iowa Bishop," Ebenezer, 1944.

Ekman, A. P., Allmänna Konferensen nu och för femton år sedan, Nya Wecko-Posten, September 26, 1894.

———, Swedish Baptist Growth in New York City. The Christian Inquirer, December 28, 1892.

Ellison, O., A letter to the author in regard to the early history of Swedish Baptists in Lower Michigan, July 17, 1930.

Ericson, C. Geo., "40 Years of Publishing Good Tidings," Advance, 1950.

Gordh, Agnes, "En Herrens Tjänarinna," Ungdoms-Stjärnan, February, 1910. (This article deals with Johanna Anderson, the first Swedish Baptist foreign missionary).

Nordlander, E. J., "Det Utmärkande i Våra Fäders Tro," Svenska Standaret, October 10, 1922.

Olson, Adolf, "Educational Work of the Swedish Baptists of America." Yearbook, Swedish Historical Society of America, 1926.

———, "Twenty Years as President of Bethel Institute." An address delivered on the occasion of G. Arvid Hagstrom's 20th anniversary as president of Bethel Institute, January 1934.

———, "Vännen Gordh," Svenska Standaret, January 30, 1940.

Sandell, Eric, "En Historisk Återblick," Minnesskrift, 1914. A pamphlet prepared by the last graduating class of the Swedish Baptist Theological Seminary, Morgan Park, Illinois.

Sword, Gustaf, "Ola Hanson, An Apostle to the Kachins," Bulletin of Bethel Institute, St. Paul, Minnesota, July 1938.

Wingblade, A. J., "The Kansas Apostle" — August Johnson. Advance, 1947.

NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALS

Augustana och Missionären, Rock Island, 1879–1889.

The Baptist Evangel, Chicago, 1931–1940.

Baneret, Swedish Baptist Weekly, Minneapolis, 1901–1910.

Bethel Herald. Bethel Theological Seminary, St. Paul, 1918.

Evangelisk Tidskrift. Swedish Baptist Monthly, edited and published by J. A. Edgren and Eric Wingren. Chicago, 1877–1884. Contains much important source material.

Evangelisten, Stockholm and Uppsala, 1856–1883. Published by A. Wiberg and C. G. Lagergren.

Fyrbåken, Minneapolis, 1901–1903.

Hemlandet, det Gamla och det Nya. Galesburg and Chicago, 1855–1900.

Missions in Minnesota. September-October, 1950. Minneapolis.

Nya Wecko-Posten, Chicago. Swedish Baptist Weekly, published by Eric Wingren, 1884–1918.

Seminarie-Posten, April-May, 1922. Bethel Theological Seminary, St. Paul.

Svenska Folkets Tidning, Minneapolis, June 4, 1884.

Svenska Standaret (The Standard), Chicago. Official journal of the Baptist General Conference of America since 1911.

Ungdoms-Stjärnan, Chicago and Minneapolis, 1907–1910.

Wecko-Posten, Stockholm, 1868–1951.

Yearbook of the Swedish Historical Society of America, Volume XI, 1926. St. Paul.

Zions Wakt, Chicago. A Swedish Baptist Journal published by J. A. Edgren, 1874–1876.

Zions Wäktare, Chicago 1871. Published by J. A. Edgren.

MANUSCRIPTS

Alcester, A Short History of the first Twenty-five Years of the Baptist Church, Alcester, South Dakota, 1907–1932.

Algoma, History of the Algoma Swedish Baptist Church, Michigan.

Altona, Brief Sketch of the Swedish Baptist Church, Altona, Illinois, 1897.

Anderson, Paul M., A History of the Publications that have Served the Baptist General Conference of America. Graduation Thesis. Bethel Theological Seminary, 1950.

Ashland, Historical Sketch of the First Thirty-seven Years. Salem Baptist Church, Ashland, Wisconsin, 1890–1927.

Benson, P., Historical Review of the Activities of the Swedish Baptists in California, 1884–1939.

Berg, Eric, "Lösryckta Blad ur Skandinaviska Baptisternas i Canada Historia."

———, Life of Olaus Okerson.

Big Springs, Historik. Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Big Springs, South Dakota, 1869–1924.

———, A History of the Baptist Church, Big Springs, 1869–1929.

Bodien, O., The Swedish Baptists of Minnesota, 1908.

Brainerd, A Brief History of the Baptist Church, Brainerd, Minnesota.

Brandt, Edwin, A Short Historical Account of the Swedish Baptists of Canada. Graduation Thesis. Bethel Theological Seminary, St. Paul, 1931.

Brooklyn, Historik över Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingens, Brooklyn, New York, 45-åriga Verksamhet, 1883–1928.

———, Historik. Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingens, Brooklyn, New York, 50-åriga Verksamhet, 1884–1934.

Cambridge, Historical Sketch of the Swedish Baptist Church, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Cedarhome, Historical Sketch of the Swedish Baptist Church, Cedarhome, Washington.

Cherry Grove, Historical Sketch of the Swedish Baptist Church, Cherry Grove, Oregon.

Chicago, A Brief History of the Third Swedish Baptist Church, Chicago.

———, Fifteen Years History. Fourth Swedish Baptist Church, Chicago.

———, The First Swedish Baptist Church of Chicago. After Seventy Years.

———, Fifty-Year Survey of the Englewood Swedish Baptist Church, Chicago, 1935.

———, Historical Sketch of the Tabernacle Swedish Baptist Church, Chicago.

———, Tenth Anniversary Sketch of the Salem Swedish Baptist Church, Chicago.

Conference, Original "protokoll" (Minutes) of the first Conference of Swedish Baptists, 1856–1859, 1862–1869, 1872, 1879.—Very valuable.

Cook, Records of the Cook Baptist Church, Cook, Minnesota.

Dalesburg, History of the Swedish Baptist Church, Dalesburg, South Dakota, 1871–1900.

Dalton, Tioårs Berättelse. Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Dalton, Michigan, 1891–1901.

East Little Fork, Records of the Swedish Baptist Church, East Little Fork, Minnesota.

Edgren, J. A., Facta. This is a manuscript containing the main facts of his life.

———, Recollections from the Sea, the War, and the Mission Field. This is a translation from the Swedish original "Minnen."

———, Scrap Book, 2 vols. A collection of clippings and personal notes by Edgren.

Ekman, A. P., Autobiographical Notes.

———, Letter by Ekman to G. W. Northrup, May 21, 1888. The letter deals mostly with the controversy concerning the doctrine of the atonement in Stromsburg, Nebraska, 1886.

———, Svenska Baptisternas i Östra Staterna Uppkomst och Utveckling.

Engwall, Swan A., Kort Historisk Översikt av Svenska Baptisternas i California Verksamhet, 1884–1926.

Escanaba, Records of the Swedish Baptist Church, Escanaba, Michigan.

Eveleth, Records of the Swedish Baptist Church, Eveleth, Minnesota.

Everett, Historik. Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Everett, Washington, 1901–1930.

Fergus Falls, Fiftieth Anniversary History of the Swedish Baptist Church, Fergus Falls, Minnesota, 1870–1920.

———, Sixty Years History of the Baptist Church, Fergus Falls, Minnesota.

Ferndale, Historical Sketch of the Swedish Baptist Church, Ferndale, Washington.

Fleming, Bruce, The Finnish Baptist Mission Union of America. Graduation Thesis. Bethel Theological Seminary, St. Paul, 1940.

Galesburg, Ten Years History of the Swedish Baptist Church, Galesburg, Illinois.

Gardner, Thirty-five Years History. Swedish Baptist Church, Gardner, Massachusetts.

Geneva, Thirty Years History of the Swedish Baptist Church, Geneva, Illinois.

Home Mission Record, New York, July 1853; February, March, April and December, 1854; March 1855. Copies of letters and reports by F. O. Nilsson and Gustaf Palmquist.

Homestead, Records of the Swedish Baptist Church, Homestead, Wisconsin.

Hoquiam, History of the Swedish Baptist Church, Hoquiam, Washington.

Houston, A History of the Swedish Baptist Church of Houston, Minnesota. Diamond Jubilee, 1928.
———, Protokollbok (Minutes) Houston Baptist Church.
———, Recollections of the Pioneers by Alex Abraham.

Isanti, Seventy Years History of the Isanti Swedish Baptist Church, Minnesota, 1930.
———, Ninetieth Anniversary History of the North Isanti Swedish Baptist Church, Minnesota, 1950.
———, Copy of original Minutes of the Isanti Swedish Baptist Church.
Ittermann, Arthur, Missionary Administration of the Swedish Baptist General Conference of America. A doctoral dissertation, Central Baptist Seminary, Kansas City, Kansas, 1950.

Kansas, A History of the Swedish Baptist Churches of Kansas, 1881–1901.
Kansas City, Historik. A Brief Sketch of the Swedish Baptist Church of Kansas City, Kansas, 1879–1901.
Karlstad, Forty Years History of the Swedish Baptist Church, Karlstad, Minnesota.

Lake Elizabeth, Femtioårs Berättelse om Svenska Baptistförsamlingen i Lake Elizabeth, Minnesota, 1871–1921.
Lake Sarah, Twenty-fifth Anniversary History. Swedish Baptist Church, Lake Sarah, Minnesota, 1889–1914.
Lancaster, Thirty Years History of the Lancaster Baptist Church, Minnesota.
Leander, Records of the Leander Baptist Church, Minnesota.

Manistee, Historik över Första Baptistförsamlingen, Manistee, Michigan, 1872–1912.
Marquette, Records of the Swedish Baptist Church, Marquette, Michigan.
Mason, Records of the Swedish Baptist Church, Mason, Wisconsin.
Maynard, Forty Years History of the Swedish Baptist Church, Maynard (Leenthrop) Minnesota, 1922.
Michigan, Historik över Svenska Baptisternas i Södra Michigan Verksamhet, 1872–1902.
———, Historik. Svenska Baptistförsamlingarna i Övre Michigan, 1872–1902.
Monmouth, Brief Sketch of the Monmouth Baptist Church, Monmouth, Illinois.
Montclair, Historical Records. Swedish Baptist Church, Montclair, New Jersey.

Nebraska, Några Historiska Drag av vår Mission i Nebraska, 1869–1901.
New England, Historik. New England Konferensen, 1901.
Norelius, A., Letter to P. Lovene, June 13, 1923.
Norwood, Historical Notes. Swedish Baptist Church, Norwood, Massachusetts.
Nilsson, F. O., One volume of F. O. Nilsson's Diary, 1855–1868. Also several papers in regard to the exiled Nilsson, including his speech of defense before the High Court at Jönköping, a number of letters, and his pardon, signed by King Carl XV of Sweden, December 11, 1860.

Nilsson, F. O., Letters by F. O. Nilsson to Svenska-Amerikanaren, July to August, 1879.

Nyquist, G., August Johnson, "Kansas Apostel."

Ogema, Records of the Swedish Baptist Church, Ogema, Wisconsin.

Oakland, Forty-five years History. Swedish Baptist Church, Oakland, California, 1885–1930.

Omark, Edwin J., A History of the Swedish Baptist Churches in California. A Thesis, Bethel Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota, 1944.

Oregon, Svenska Baptisternas i Oregon Historia, 1901.

Pasadena, Ten Years History of the Swedish Baptist Church, Pasadena, California, 1920–1930.

Pearson, Historical Notes. Swedish Baptist Church, Pearson, Washington.

Peterson, Andrew, His Diary, in English translation, 1855–1898. Andrew Peterson was a charter member of the Swedish Baptist Church, Scandia, Minnesota.

Prentice, Twenty-five Years History of the Swedish Baptist Church, Prentice, Wisconsin, 1891–1916.

Preston, Historical Notes. Swedish Baptist Church, Preston, Washington.

Rock Island, Two volumes of Minutes (Protokollböcker) of the Swedish Baptist Church of Rock Island, Illinois, covering its whole history, 1852–1930. The Rock Island church was the first Swedish Baptist Church in America.

Russell, Records. Swedish Baptist Church, Russell, Minnesota.

Saint Cloud, Records of the Swedish Baptist Church, St. Cloud, Minnesota.

Scandia, One volume of Minutes (Protokollbok) of the Swedish Baptist Church, Scandia, Minnesota, 1855–1934.

Schenectady, Historical Records. Swedish Baptist Church, Schenectady, New York.

Soudan, Records of the Swedish Baptist Church, Soudan, Minnesota.

South Dakota, History of the Swedish Baptist Conference of South Dakota.

Spokane, Historik. Första Svenska Baptistförsamlingens, Spokane, Washington, Tjugofemåriga Verksamhet, 1894–1919.

Sun Prairie, Historical Sketch of the Swedish Baptist Church, Sun Prairie, South Dakota, 1883–1900.

Sunrise, Historical Notes. Swedish Baptist Church, Sunrise, Washington.

Superior, Fifty Year Survey of Ogden Avenue Baptist Church, Superior, Wisconsin, 1888–1938.

Swedberg, Anna M., A Short History of Adelphia College, Seattle, Washington.

Sycamore and DeKalb, Tenth Anniversary History of the Swedish Baptist Churches in Sycamore and DeKalb, Illinois.

Tustin, Sketch of the Swedish Baptist Church, Tustin, Michigan.

Vega, Thirty Years History of the Swedish Baptist Church, Vega (Alvarado) Minnesota.

Warren, Kort Historik. Svenska Baptistförsamlingen, Warren, Pennsylvania, 1890–1915.

Warren, Ten Years History. Swedish Baptist Church, Warren, Oregon.
Washington, Historik över de Svenska Baptisterna i Washington, 1889–1901.
Wisconsin, Minutes of the Northern Wisconsin Mission Society, 1904–1925.
———, Ten Years History of the Wisconsin Summer Assembly, Wood Lake, Wisconsin.

INDEX

Page numbers in *italics* refer to biographical sketches or full treatment of a subject.

Abernethy, W. S., 187
Adelphia College, 423, *499*
Ahlquist Anders, 126, 147
Ahlquist, Jonas, 195, 526, 534, 535
Ahlquist, Margaret, 527
Ahlstrom, A., 315, 316
Ahlstrom Andrew, 129
Ahlstrom, L. J., 117, 128, 285, 345, 349, 399, 413, 442, 469, 472, 478, 503, 512, 586
Ahlstrom, O. J., 206
Ahnfelt, P G., 10
Alberta Baptist Bible Academy, 427
Albigenses, 2
Aldeen, C. A. 220, 341
Almquist, C. J., 345, 402, 566, 571
American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, 52, 158, 417, 435, 436, 448, 518, 520, 521, 523, 524, 525, 527, 528, 529, 534, 536, 537, 538
American Baptist Home Mission Society, 5, 36, 101, 102, 103, 136, 234, 359, 379, 407, 413, 414, 417, 448, 458
American Baptist Publication Society, 41, 134, 294, 417, 430, 448, 458, 502, 509, 541, 542, 543, 545, 546
American Sunday School Union, 540
Anabaptist, 1, 2, 3
Anderson, A. G., 316
Anderson, Aron, 109
Anderson, Bengt, 343, 526, 527, 535
Anderson, Betsy, 83, 117, 296
Anderson, Carl, A., 302, 304
Anderson, C. V., 360
Anderson, C. W., 274
Anderson, David E., 184, 584
Anderson, David M., 574
Anderson, Edith, 348, 527
Anderson, Elam, 526
Anderson, Eric, 195
Anderson, G. R., 451
Anderson, Johanna, *517*, 529
Anderson, John, 55, 59, 88, *136*, 138, 179, 180, 205, 244, 306, 377, 448
Anderson, John S., 528
Anderson, Peter, 89, 397
Anderson, Vendla, 526
Andover, Illinois, 22, 256
Antonson, Carl, 195, 304, 348
Appelquist, A. E., 547
Arlander, Lars, 292, 359
Arlander, R. A., 122, 186, 292, 439
Arnquist, A. O., 361
Arosenius, Carl, 169
Asp, Caroline, 44
Asplund, Charles, 378, 381
Asplund, Dorothy, 528
Atonement Controversy, 357, 358, 585, 586
Avey, Elna Forsell, 527
Axling, N. E., 95, 123, 125, 148
Axling, William, 525

Backlund, A. W., 268, 399, 401
Backlund, J. O., xi, xiii, 249, 283, 324, 490, 502, 507, 513, 600
Backlund, L. M., 541
Bain, Mrs. A. L., 518
Baptismal Regeneration, *Ch. 2*
"Baptist Mission Forty," 129, 469
Baptist Theological Union, 432
Baptist Union of Western Canada, 427, 480
Baptist Union Theological Seminary, 159, 163, 164, 167, 483
Baptists in History, *1*
Baptists in Sweden, *5*
Beckman, Erick, 108, 312
Bengel, J. A., 15
Bengtson, A. J., 127, 367
Bengtson, J. A., 365
Bengtson, Olaus, 256
Benson, P., 374
Berg, August, 526
Berg, Ellen, 194
Berg, Eric, xii, 443
Berg, Isak, 331
Berg, John, 566
Bergen, N. J. L., 426
Bergh, Martin, 479
Bergfalk, Helen, 539
Berglund, Magnus, 198, 223, 543

Bergman, Albertina, 321
Bergman, Erika, 52, 518
Bergquist, Andrew, 178
Bergsten, Selma, 527
Bergstrom, Olaf, 409
Bethel Academy, 423, 489, *490*
Bethel Academy and Theological Seminary, *431,* 493
Bible School and Young People's Work, 438
Bible Wagons, 542, 543
Bishop Hill, 22
Bjelland, Irwin, 539
Bjork, Dale, 539
Bjork, John, 466
Bjorklund, Hulda, 527
Bjorkman, J. O., 302, 311
Bjorkquist, Emanuel, 199, 387
Blomgren, Andrew, 90, 110, *241*, 251
Blomquist, Andrew, 224
Boberg, Frederica, 44
Boberg, Oscar, 229
Bodien, Olof, 72, 182, 215, 216, 225, *250,* 423, 450, 490, 509, 510, 515, 546, 577
Bodien, Mrs. Olof, 557
Bodin, Esther, 527
Brask, Arleth, 539
Bremer, Fredrika, 176
Broady, K. O., 100, 158
Brock, Earl, 534
Brosell, Carrie Rosenquist, 568
Burgason, A. M., 547
Burt, William, 295
Byleen, K. E., 293, 572
Bystrom, Kenneth, 527

Calhoun, Donald, 539
Calvin, John, 2
Calvinism, 4
Canada, *478*
Carey, William, 4
Carlson, A. W., 327
Carlson, C., 289
Carlson, C. Alfred, 548, 569
Carlson, C. E., 496, 497
Carlson, Eric, 184, 270, 282, 348
Carlson, Erland, 284
Carlson, F. O., 276, 317, 318, 469, 470, 512
Carlson, Fred, 370, 569
Carlson, J. A., 277, 402
Carlson, Johan Fredric, 84
Carlson, Martin, 278, 384
Carlson, O. F., 260
Carlson, Peter, 144
Carlson, Philip, 317, 551
Carlson, Victor, 123
Carlton, B. L., 122, 187
Carroll, J. Leonard, 544
Cassel, Peter, 21
Cedarberg, J. O., 494
Cederberg, J. S., 311
Chalberg, Ewald, 559
Chapman, Annie Abbott, 158
Charles XV, King, 32
Chase, Henry, 26
Christenson, Victoria, 526
Christopherson, N., 374
Church Buildings, *594*
Clafford, Torsten, 334, 336
Clifford, John, 4
Clint, R. A., 293
Clough, John E., 523
Collins, Florence Nystrom, 527
Colvin, A. B., 290, 401, 402
Controversies, 64, 585
Conventicle Act of 1726, 13, 27
Cooper, Grace, 527
Copeland, Norman B., 539
Crook, Rudolph L., 526

Dahl, Leontine, 525
Dahlberg, Eric, 352
Dahlberg, M., 344
Dahlberg, Nels A., 352
Dahlby, Albert, 195, 366, 526
Dahlby, C. P., 494
Dahlen, C. O., 259, 275, 296, 326, 515
Dahlman, Spännar Lars Larson, 107
Dahlquist, J. O., 293
Dahlquist, Martin, 111, 119, 212, 226
Dahlquist, R. A., 551
Dahlstrom, A. J., 187, 196
Daily Vacation Bible Schools, 452, 554
Damberg, Theodor, 222
Danielson, Margareta, 89
Danielson, Mary, 575
Danielson, Mary E., 195, 525
Danielson, Walfred, 314, 497, 526, 537
Delaware Colony, 17
Donatists, 2
Drake, Adolf, 158
Duvenberg, Olof, 227

Earl, George, 575
Earl, R. O., 51, 423, 574
East, Hjalmar, 525
Eastlund, Almyra, 527
Eastlund, O., 89
Edblom, John, 224

Edgren, J. A., xii, 97, 101, 148, 154, *155*, 161, 163, 164, 167, 169, 170, 175, 206, 281, 358, 362, 391, 409, 411, 412, 419, 442, 483, 500, 510, 513, 579, 585, 587
Edgren, Julia, 166
Edstam, Arvid, 195
Edwards, Jonathan, 72
Edwards, Paul, 539
Ehnbom, Esther, 526
Ekbom, Anders, 110
Ekely, John, 166
Eklof, Ellis, 258
Eklund, John, 222
Ekman, A. P., 100, 104, 111, 121, 124, 226, 284, 306, 310, 357, 378, 406, 407, 410, *411*, 419, 442, 460, 468, 479, 509, 585
Ekstrom, August, 194, 195
Ekstrom, John E., 501
Ekvall, Martin, 518
Ekvall, Mrs Emma, 556
Elim Park Home of Rest, 422, 464, *569*
Ellison, Arthur, 196
Ellison, Ole, 291, 292, 376, 568
Engberg, Olof, 90, *245*
Engberg, P. E., 331, 460, *462*, 542
Englund, P. A., 321, 326, 459
Engstrand, O. J., 264, 338, 460, 570
Engwall, Martin, 526
Engwall, Swan, 600
Erickson, Agnes, 539
Erickson, Bennet, 112, 200, 258, 599
Erickson, E., 311
Erickson, Edwin, 526
Erickson, E. W., 130, 469
Erickson, Henry, 526
Erickson, John, 87, *137*, 239, 448
Erickson, J. Paul, 427, 569
Erickson, Lottie, 194
Erickson, Pats Erick, 107, 109, 361
Erickson, Signe, 343, 526
Ericson, C. George, xiii, 507, 553, 600
Erikson, Erik, 230
Erikson, J. Alfred, 217, 391
Erikson, Martin, xiii, 194, 507
Esbjorn, Lars, 68
Esselstrom, Matts, 481
Evangelism, 183, 583

Fernlund, E. A., 543
Fiftieth Jubilee, *418*, 442, 560
Finnish Baptist Mission Union, *481*
Finstrom, B. S., 527
Fjellstedt, P., 15
Fläck, Olof, 108
Flemming, Edward, 481
Fogelstrom, John, 212
Foreign Missionary Advance, 528, 529, *535*
Foreign Missions, *435*
Forsell, J. P., 290, 291, 331
Forsell, D., 39, 40, 246
Forster, A. P., 27
Franson, Fredrik, 83, 109, 125, 516
Freeman, A. J., 113, 184, 456, 583
Friborg, Emil, 105, 272, 375, 376, 570
Friborg, John, 393, 398, 401
Fridhem Home of Rest, 422, *565*
Frisk, L. L., 55, 79, 80, *133*, 144, 147, 257, 295
Fritzell, M. B., 548
Frodig, C. P., 114, 115, 117
Frykenberg, Erik, 330, 526
Frykman, N., 509
Fuller, Andrew, 4
Fulton Street Prayer Meeting, 23
Funk, Elsie, 539

Gales, Amory, 87, 89, 178, 179
Galesburg, Ill., 22
General Baptists, 3
George, Lloyd, 4
God's Invasion Army, 438, 584
Goodman, Rodger, 186
Goodspeed, T. W., 161
Goranson, F. R., 378, 379
Gordh, Arvid, 105, 423, 490, *491*, 495, 502, 505, 589
Gordh, Mrs. A., 223
Gordh, C. E., 267
Gordon, A. J., 240, 491, 591
Granquist, C. J., 382
Grant, Albert, 451, 546
Grant, C. J., 297
Grasshoppers, 63
Griffith, Benjamin, 545
Gronlund, J. E., 297, 303
Gustafson, David, 283, 489, 495, 526
Gustafson, G. A., 201
Guston, David, 596

Haglund, Mrs. Ole., 573
Haglund, Dorette, 539
Hagstrom, G. Arvid, 97, 98, 187, 193, 216, 428, 434, 438, 441, 455, 489, *492*, 495, 498, 501, 542, 545, 550, 558, 565
Hagstrom, Lina, 390, 547
Hagstrom, K. Wm., 195, 538, 539
Hagquist, Anna M., 526, 556
Hake, O., 128

Hall, A. G., xi, 281, 378, 443, 503, 512
Hall, E. E., 187
Hallander, H., 116, 350
Hallberg, Charles, 112
Hallgren, Ernest, 212
Halvarson, Eric, 215, 503
Halvarson, H., 202
Halvarson, John, 423
Hamlin, F. C., 194
Hammar, A. A., 296, 305
Hammerbeck, Andrew, 312
Hanson, A. P., 282, 341, 413
Hanson, Ola, 124, 514, 518, *520*, 529
Hasselblad, Carl, 361, 474
Hasselblad, Gordon, 353
Hasselblad, Oliver, 527
Hasselquist, T. N., 30, 67
Hauck, Val, 554
Hayland, N., 117, 155, 162, 359, 363, 374, 378, 392, 474
Hedberg, F. G., 34
Hedberg, Fredrika, 194
Hedberg, Isak, 219, 569
Hedberg, V. E., 186, 282, 387, 401
Hedeen, Carl, 338
Hedeen, John, 457
Hedeen, Olof, 271, 338, 438, 442, 460, *487*, 579
Hedlund, L. G., 227
Hedstrom, Jonas, 69
Hedstrom, O. G., 69
Hegberg, P. O., 369
Hennepin, Louis, 176
Hernlund, Eric, 178
Hill, F. A., 474
Hill, James, 434
Hjelm, P. A., 97, 258, 278, 328, 501
Hjeltman, P. O., 125
Hjertstrom, J. W., 264, 268, 328, 502, 503, 588
Hokanson, Esther, 526
Hokanson, M. F., 67, 82
Hollstrom, John, 55, 206
Holm, A. G., 217, 325
Holm, August B., 527
Holm, Edna, 348
Holm, Reuben, 348, 436, 527, 533, 535, 537, 539, 547, 553
Holmberg, Carl, 343
Holmberg, P. G., 282, 300
Holmberg, W. G., 367
Holmer, Adolph, 494, 558
Holmer, Albin, 370
Holmgren, A. A., 501
Holmgren, Ole, 314
Homes for the Aged, *564*
Hooker, Thomas, 47
Hough, Ferris, 539
Houston, Minn., *52*
Hubmaier, B., 3
Huggerth, J. A., 367
Hugo, John, 304, 331,
Hulbert, A. J., 283
Hultberg, N. O., 400
Hymnals, 508

Independent Foreign Missions Work, *529*
Interchurch World Movement, 591, 593

Jarl, F. G., 130
Jeanson, R. E., 101, 102, 179, 512
Jensen, Arlene, 539
Jensen, N. C., 122, 359
Jensen, N. P., 159, 162, 163
Jentoft, P., 287, 288, 289, 292, 295, 300
Jernberg, August, 415
Jeunette, Esther, 527
Johanson, C. G., 148
Johanson, Judith, 194
Johanson, Lauritz, 124, 322, 327, 330, 474
Johnson, Andrew, 121, 388
Johnson, Anna V., 271, 525, 555
Johnson, August, 366, 367, 368, 369, 422, 476, 568
Johnson, C., 147
Johnson, C. E., 326
Johnson, C. J., 353
Johnson, Elizabeth, 194
Johnson, Emery, 497
Johnson, Mrs. Erick, 557
Johnson, George, 539, 555
Johnson, J. A. H., 352
Johnson, J. C., 113, 211
Johnson, John G., 186
Johnson, Joyce, 527
Johnson, J. L., 178
Johnson, J. P., 230
Johnson, Karl, J., 299
Johnson, Linus, 216, 573
Johnson, Magnus, 195, 377
Johnson, Maynard, 539
Johnson, Michael, 214, 296
Johnson, O. J., 382
Johnson, Olivia, 526
Johnson, Oscar W., 338
Johnson, Paul, 311, 316, 401
Johnson, J. Warren, 538, 539
Jones, I. C., 123
Judson, Adoniram, 5

Junior College, 497

Karlson, K. J., 329, 495, *496*
Kerr, Scott A., 539
Klingberg Children's Home, 422, *560*
Klingberg, Haddon, 564
Klingberg, J. E., xii, 273, 422, 443, 460, 510
Klingberg, Mabel, 564
Klingberg, Robert, xiii
Knight, William, 331
Köbner, 40
Kohler, Wilhelm, 342
Kumlin, Axel, 339

Lagergren, C. G., xii, 149, 173, 249, 270, 373, 434, 440, 442, *484*, 489, 492, 495, 501, 511, 579, 592
Lagergren, Selma, 526
Lagerquist, A. G., 117, 277, 422, 472
Language Transition, *596*
Larm, Leona, 539
Larson, Alfred, 573
Larson, Andrew, 312, 314, 470
Larson, August, 289
Larson, Dana, 539
Larson, David, 573
Larson, Elsie, 195, 527
Larson, Fredrick, 224
Larson, Magnus, 193, 218, 370, 546
Larson, Martin, 339
Larson, Ralph, 539
Larson Robert (Printer), 501
Larson, Robert, 569
"Läsare," 14, 15, 20, 21, 24, 577, 601
Latourette, K. S., 593
Laurence, Oliver, 334
Laymen's Movement, 558
Lay preachers, 13
Leander, Gust, 222
Levin, Hans, 351
Lidbom, Harold, 584
Lidney, Nels, 572
Liljeroth, Gustaf, 373, 385, 389, 394
Lilley, M. L., 292
Lind, Olof, 352
Lind, O. Milton, 194
Lindahl, Nels, 574
Lindberg, Alfred E., 324
Lindberg, Esther, 112, 525
Lindberg, Henning, 572
Lindberg, John A., 348, 425
Lindberg, N., 115
Lindberg, O. S., 111, 189, 203, *243*, 308, 309, 310
Lindberg, Sten, 539
Lindblad, E. S., 187, 355, 401, 431
Lindblom, Alfred, 572
Linden, F., 248, 348, 374
Linder, John, 548
Linder, L. W., 259, 347
Lindgren, Axel, 201, 302, 376, 547
Lindh, Olof, 50, 70, 74, 80, 94, 95, 102, 103, 148, 149, 258, 323, 326, 333, 334, 337, 339, 340, 346, 348, 368, 406, 407, 419, 454, 459, *460*
Lindholm, Eric, 195, 294, 369
Lindstedt, August, 532, 533, 537
Lindstrom, G. W., 326, 329, 464, 571
Linne, A. A., 211, 227
Lodin, Erik, 89
Lofstedt, A. O., 208
Lofstrom, Detlof, 290
Lonn, F. O., 383
Lovegren, August, 374, 387
Lovegren, L. A., 526
Lovene, Peter, 360, 513
Luckman, James, 539
Lund, Eric, 514, 516, 525
Lundgren, C., 357, 363
Lundeen, A. O., 571
Lundin, E., 128, 337
Lundquist, Daniel, 89
Lundquist, Gustaf, 267, 297, 308, 311
Lundvall, B. H., 40
Lutheranism, 30 34, 48, 64, 66, 72, 73, 81, 85, 86, 488
Luther, Martin, 2

Maclaren, Alexander, 4
Magnuson, James, 550
Malmsten, August, 137, 409
Malmsten, F. W., 178
Malmsten, Wyman, 498
Mariners' Church, 6, 26, 41, 72, 99, 101, 104, 158
Mattson, Hans, 88
Mayer, B-Etta, 539
Melby, Mary, 570
Men's Organizations, *558*
Merchant, Charles, 539
Methodism, 72
Midwest Hebrew Mission, 585
Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board, 442
Minnesota Massacre, 87, 110
Moberg, Fred, 572
Moline, Ill., 22
Montanists, 2
Moravian Revival, 13

Morgan, T. J., 161, 163
Morten, N. N., 164, 325, 358, 484, 488
Mounds and Midway Hospitals, *574*
Mollersvard, C. J., 246
Murray, William, 539

National Brotherhood, 438, 559
Nelson, A. B., 569
Nelson, Ada, 527
Nelson, A. H., 409
Nelson, Andrew (Pioneer), *229*
Nelson, Andrew, 539
Nelson, C. M., 281, 390, 394, 396, 398, 477
Nelson, Edward O., 584
Nelson, Effie, 496
Nelson, E. N., 527
Nelson, Ernest E., 571
Nelson, Esther, 526, 539
Nelson, Esther M., 526
Nelson, Eric A., 127, 518
Nelson, Franklin, 527, 535, 537, 539
Nelson, F. O., 374, 379, 392, 398, 401, 476
Nelson, Jacob, 571
Nelson, Knut, 374, 378, 379
Nelson, Linnea, 527
Nelson, N. E., 325
Nelson, Nels, 187
Nelson, Olof, 123
Nelson, P. G., 184, 204, 584
Nelson, Reuben, 348
Nelson, S. A., 294
Nelson, Sidney, B., 544
Nelson, Swaney, 122, 187, 278
New Movement (Pentecostalism), 264 588
New World Movement, 458, 591, 592, 593
New York Tract Society, 26
Nicholson, Elmer, 207, 377
Nicholson, John, 423
Nilson, Anna, 264, 282
Nilsson, F. O., 6, 16, 17, *25*, 29, 30, 31, 34, 39, 41, 52, 55, 56, 62, 68, 73, 79, 81, 82, 84, 86, 87, 99, 113, 133, 137, 138, 142, 144, 145, 177, 179, 189, 257, 349, 394, 446, 448, 512
Nilsson, Sven Christian, 86
Nordberg, A. B., 190, 363, 361, 363
Nordell, P., 29, 147, 295
Nordlander, E. J., 268, 342, 455, 542
Nordstrom, Elaine, 539
Nordstrom, J. A., 222, 364
Norelius, Anders, 44, 55, 83, 89, 114, 115, *135*, 141, 145, 147, 446
Norelius, Eric, 37, 66, 84
Norelius, Jonas, 85
Norell, Jonas, 89
Norrby, J. T., 547
Northrup, G. W., 164, 586
Novatians, 2
Nyberg, Nils, 176
Nygren, Gust, *223*, 425
Nylander, Gideon, 377
Nylander, N. J., 128, 130, 302
Nylund, Emil, 331
Nyman, Per, 13
Nyquist, Gustaf, 547

Oberg, C. E., 545, 547
Oberg, J. E., 224
Oden, Edna, 526
Okerson, Olaus, 55, 66, 112, 177, 202, 205, *232*, 258, 371, 373, 377, 382, 385, 450
Olander, John, 330
Olsen, Jacob, 354
Olson, A., 147
Olson, Aleck, 527
Olson, Adolf, 194, 196
Olson, August, 206, 379, 392, 394, 408
Olson, Mrs. August, 555
Olson, E. W., 436, 532, 556
Olson, Eric W., 474, 476, 541, 542
Olson, L. J., 308, 546
Olson, Mildred, 527
Olson, Nils, 145, 320, 442
Olson, Olof, 315
Olson, P., 289
Olson, Reuben, 376
Olson, Walter, 194
Omark, Edwin J., 393, 495
Oncken, J. G., 6, 27, 40
Ongman, John, 55, 97, 138, 162, 164, 179, 189, *238*, 244, 261, 278, 285, 307, 406, 407, 408, 450
Oregon Baptist Retirement Home, *573*
Orest, Carl, 195
Orgren, A. B., 76, 166, 180, 190, 263, *397*
Osbeck, C. R., 105, 515
Osbrink, G. A., 383
Oscar, Crown Prince, 12
Oscar I, King, 28
Oster, Evelyn, 574
Oster, J. G., 194, 366
Ostergren, G. O., 190
Ostergren, K. A., 170, 190, 322, 330
Osterholm, Axel, 370, 526
Osterholm, Klas, 334

Ostling, Mrs. Oscar, 556
Ostrom, Hjalmar, 525
Ostrom, P., 186, 331, 337, 366

Paine, Thomas, 32
Palm, A. F., 309, 586
Palm, A. P., 354
Palm, Charles, 281, 307, 368, 395, 455, 456, 542, 545, 550, 566, 568
Palmborg, Fred, 195, 331, 426, 480
Palmblad, John, 386
Palmquist, C. G., 187
Palmquist, Gustaf, 25, 29, 30, *33*, 43, 44, 48, 65, 72, 73, 78, 79, 81, 82, 83, 84, 100, 113, 132, 134, 141, 144, 153, 158, 257, 260, 346, 349, 441, 454, 508, 512, 518
Palmquist, L. A., 147
Parker, Theodore, 32
Parsons, N. C., 525
Particular Baptists, 4
Paulson, Gerda, 195, 518
Paulson, Richard, 527
Pearson, N. G., 271, 527
Peck, John M., 5, 540
Pehrson, Näs Per, 242
Pentecostalism, 303, 381, 588
Person, Betty, 539
Person, Maser Anders, 106
Petersen, L. E., 195
Peterson, Andrew, 56, 57, 129
Peterson, A. E., 112
Peterson, Arlene, 539
Peterson, Astrid, 527
Peterson, Frank, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 63, 74, 141, 166, 180, 210, 215, 216, 254, 264, 419, 420, 423, 432, 441, 442, 490, 493, 512, *518*, 530, 586, 592
Peterson, Gust, 284
Peterson, H. L., 551
Peterson, Jacob, 186, 466
Peterson, John A., 48, 49, 87, *138*, 147, 179, 448, 508
Peterson, Olof, 81, 144
Peterson, O. P., 192, 258, 333, 334, 423
Peterson, P. Alfred, 426, 427
Peterson, Peter, 346
Peterson, S. J., 304, 342
Peterson, V. L., 573, 585
Peterson, Violetta, 518
Peterson, W. A., 303, 488
Petrobrusians, 2
Philanthropic Institutions, *560*
Pietistic Revival, 13
Pine Lake, Wis. Colony, 18, 21

Red River Valley Home for the Aged, *573*
Rees, Mrs. John, 527
Religious Conditions in Sweden, *9*
Religious convictions, 71
Renius, Victor, 271, 527, 531
Revivals, *22*
Riley, W. B., 592
Ring, John, 95, 117, 128, 179, 284, 469
Ring, P. A., 120, 351
Rockefeller, John D., Sr., 342
Rockefeller, John D., Jr., 593
Rock Island, Illinois, the Cradle of the Denomination, *43*
Rodin, N. F., 114
Rohnstrom, 336
Ronngren, August, 301
Roos, John A., 194, 299, 464
Rose, Albert, 568
Rosen, Eric, 269, 270, 421, 501, 565
Rosene, John, 504
Rosendahl, F. D., 398
Rosendahl, J. A. H., 531
Rosenius, C. O., 11, 16
Rosquist, J. P., 71, 186, 298, 396, 399, 402, 546
Roy, Isak, 329
Rundquist, N. J., 80, *132*, 143, 144
Ruppert, David, 539
Russian Mission, 436, 532
Rydberg, Victor, 32
Ryden, Lilly, 526
Ryden, P., 245, 515

Sabel, Esther, xiii, 495, 553
Sahlquist, C. A., 277, 518
Samuelson, Grant, 343
Samuelson, Marvin, 343
Sandberg, Anna, 185
Sandblom, A. G., 222, 224, 387, 425, 456
Sandell, August, 380
Sandell, Eric, xiii, 162, 167, 186, 259, 264, 268, 282, 442, 456, 484, *486*, 489, 490, 495, 542, 566, 579, 586
Sandell, Victor, 304
Sandman, Eric, 48, 49, 147
Sandquist, Charles, 123
Sandvall, C. A., 186, 347, 365, 442, 541
Satterberg, Emily, 526
Scandia, Minn., *56*
Schartau, Henric, 13
Scherstrom, Eric, 249
Schillerstrom, G. O., 32
Schmidt, Emanuel, xii, 423, 495, 499, 504
Schmidt, Nathaniel, 391

Schroeder, G. W., 5, 6, 27, 99, 393, 411, 513
Schugren, Carl Adolf, 367
Schugren, E. O., 249, 425, 515, 525
Scott, George, 11, 16, 41
Seamen's Friend Society, 26
Seaquist, Anders, 305
Seaquist, Carl, J., 356
Seaquist, John R., 308
Seattle Rest Home, *573*
Segerstrom, C. A., 360
Selander, John, 343, 526, 527
Selin, Lawrence, 349
Sellergren, Peter L., 13
Seventh Day Adventism, 50, 70, 71, 109, 115, 119, 121, 126, 298, 302, 330, 352
Seventy-Fifth Jubilee, xi, 440, 519, 524
Schulene, J. M., 194, 345, 503
Shadduck, Alma Gahm, 271, 527
Sheridan, General, 411
Shogren, S. J., 50
Sibiakoffsky, E., 339, 501
Silene, Christopher, 122, 155, 161, 162, 216, 219, 262, 263, 346, 359, *409*, 414, 419, 425, 442
Simpson, A. B., 240
Sisell, A., 227
Sjodin Perfectionism, 90
Sjogren, C. A., 370
Sjogren, S. J., 50, 70
Sjolander, Allfrid, 91, 199, 221, 370, 424, 503
Sjolander, Eric, 381
Sjolander, Gideon, 386, 552
Sjolund, Anton, 185
Sjostrand, Erik, 431, 502, 505, 506, 587, 588
Skoglund, Waldemar, 506, 593, 598, 600
Skoog, A. L., 509, 510
Skooglun, Charles, 494
Smail, Alma, 271
Smith, Mathias, 89
Smyth, John, 1
Soderstrom, Peter, 44
Sohlberg, O., 165
Soneson, Nels, 223
Sorbom, P. E., 548
Sorley, Francis, 539
Sorley, Wilbur, 539
Spanish Mission, 532
Spann, J. E., 558
Sperry, David, 539
Spurgeon, C. H., 4
Stadling, Jonas, 258, 391
Star, C. J. and Peter, 83, 114, 115
Steane, Edward, 10
Stephenson, George, 69
Steward, Ira R., 99
Stolberg, L. M., 230, 480
Stoltz, Albert, 218
Strandberg, Carl, 303, 311
Summer Assembly, 549
Sund, Eric, 48
Sundberg, A. P., 315
Sundmark, C. W., 277, 285, 358
Sundstrom, Charles, 572
Sundstrom, J. P., 315, 426, 468
Sunset Old People's Home, 422, *568*
Swanson, Glen, 539
Swanson, Grace, 539
Swanson, John, 259
Swanson, John A., 194
Swanson, Melvin, 527
Swanson, O. L., 259, 282, 457, 493, 515, 518, *522*, 529, 533, 545, 548
Swanson, Mrs. Vera, 574
Swanstrom, P. E., 317
Swartz, Andrew, 354
Swartz, Petrus, 275, 279, 359, 566
Swedberg, A. G., 48, 49, 50, 70, 143, 147
Swedberg, Oscar, 224
Swedish Baptist Foreign Mission Society, 436, 530, 532, 535
Swedish Baptist Historical Society, xii, 442, 444
Swedish Baptist Ministers' Pension and Aid Association, 442
Swedish Emigration, *17*
Swenson, Erhardt, 463, 527, 547
Swenson, Wayne, 564
Sword, Gustaf, 348, 515, 522, 526
Sword, Mrs. Edna Grandin, 292
Sword, Victor, 515, 526
Sword, (Swärd), A. P., 336

Tanquist, J. E., 279, 525
Tapper, William, 544, 553
Tegenfeldt, Herman, 528, 535, 537, 539
Thomander, J. H., 9, 12
Thomas, W. W., 17, 320
Thompson, Lester, 284
Tjernlund, Axel, 195, 285, 323, 326, 328, 330, 362, 419, 459, 460, 503
Tjernlund, Mrs. J. A., 379
Tornquist, E., 414
Tornquist, Oscar, 299, 364, 467
Trends in Life and Work, *580*
Trends in Theology, *576*
Turnwall, Wm., 438
Tychson, Nils, 162

Ullmark, J. H., 95
Unonius, Gustaf, 18, 127

Valerius, N. E., 290
Vasa, King Gustavus, 9
Verdugo Home, *571*
Village Creek, Iowa, 47
Vingren, Carl, 184, 359, 400

Wahlin, C., *228*
Waldemer, S. E., 283
Waldenses, 2
Waldenströmian View of the Atonement, 586
Wall, Axel, 401
Wallendorf, G. E., *272*, 301, 452, 542, 543
Wallman, C. L., 283
Walters, N. P., 566
Ward, John, 568
Wassell, Charles, *306*, 307
Watkins, Linda Erickson, 527
Webster, Leonard, 544
Wedholm, C. E., 293, 425
Wesley's teaching and revival, 4, 34
Wessman, Maurice, 353
Wester, Axel, 341, 342
Westerberg, J. P., 326, 330, 466
Westin, C. E., *224*, 450, 543
Westin, Gunnar, 30
Wiberg, Anders, 7, 16, 17, 25, 30, *37*, 44, 46, 48, 52, 56, 62, 68, 73, 78, 79, 81, 99, 134, 135, 143, 147, 153, 158, 168, 258, 295, 365, 369, 484, 512, 579
Wicklund, G., 125
Wickman, G. Theofil, 436, 531, 535
Widen, C. M., 121, 354
Widen, Earl, 353
Widen, F. W., 559
Wieselgren, Peter, 12
Wiking, Carl F., 518
Williams, Roger, 4, 330
Wilson, Captain, 160
Wilson, Harold, 360
Winblad, N. L., 206
Wingblade, A. J., 489, 491, 495
Wingblade, H. C., 370, 495, 498, 553
Wingren, Eric, 149, *171*, 266, *274*, 408, 436, 500, 504, 505, 509, 510, 511, 529, 531, 535, 579, 586, 587
Winlund, Peter, 89
Woman's American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, 517
Women's Commission, 557
Women's Organizations, *555*
World Council of Churches, 593
World Relief, 438

Yman, Amanda, 110, 217, 297, 302
Young People's Activities, *540*
Youngquist, Harris, 539

Zwingli, 2

Date Due

~~NEW BOO~~K
~~DEC 8 1 1975~~
JUN 15 1976
~~JUN 1 0~~ 1998

c

BX6247 .S8052
A centenary history,

Princeton Theological Seminary–Speer Library

1 1012 00020 6526